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**TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION IN MEXICAN
INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES: AN ANALYSIS OF
GENDER AND EMPOWERMENT**

By

Evelyn Sulem

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of Warwick, Department of Sociology

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Declaration

Some of the work contained in this thesis has been discussed in the following publications listed below. The publications and the thesis are my own work and have not been submitted for a degree at any other institution.

Puga Aguirre-Sulem, E.(2012) *Remitting faith practices. Comparing the experiences of two indigenous towns in Oaxaca, Mexico*. In: SOCHEOLAS Journal, University of Limerick, Ireland; Volume 4, Issue 1.

<http://www3.ul.ie/sociology/socheolas/vol4/1/Evelyn%20Aguirre-Sulem.pdf>

Puga Aguirre-Sulem, E.(2013) Estrategias de Subsistencia y la Feminización del Espacio Público de las Mujeres Zapotecas de San Bartolomé Quialana, Oaxaca. In: Vizcarra Bordi, Y. (eds). *La Feminización del Campo Mexicano en el Siglo XXI; localismos y transnacionalismos*. Editorial Plaza y Valdés, Mexico City.

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Abstract

This thesis presents interdisciplinary work on indigenous Mexican migration from a gender perspective. It uses a conceptual framework drawn from Agarwal (1994) and Kabeer (2001) to explore the role of transnational migration in the transformation of gender relations and identities and to enrich our understanding of the link between transnational migration and empowerment. Based on innovative multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in the Mixtec town of Santiago Cacaloxtotec, the Zapotec town of San Bartolomé Quialana; both located in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico; and the state of California, US; this research presents a high resolution comparative analysis of changing gender relations in the communities of origin and diaspora due to indigenous (mainly) male migration. Migration from both communities is transnational, gendered and undocumented; indigenous men are still seen as the natural subjects of migration, especially when this is international, but nowadays indigenous women are also expected to migrate at least while they are single.

Longer-term absence of male inhabitants has been understood as a determining factor which progressively re-constructs gender relations, increases female participation in political life and is a catalyst for women's empowerment. However a close scrutiny of the socio-political context of the communities, the dynamics of migration and a desegregation of female respondents by age/generation allows this research to argue that not all women are sharing equally in the shifts in gender relations. Moreover, while transnational migration is found to be both initiating and contributing to processes of women's empowerment, its significance is differentiated by the location, age, civil status and migrant experiences of women, and it is not the only factor at work.

In the diaspora, changes in gender relations have been observed in favour of women, as they take advantage of new opportunities in employment and education and men are obliged to participate in household work. Important processes of empowerment were detected among male and female migrants who have found opportunities that they could not have obtained in their communities of origin. However, their clandestine status still jeopardizes their transformative achievements.

Transnational migration has also served as an opportunity to re-construct and question the forms of femininity and masculinity practised in the communities. Femininity has ceased to be represented only through motherhood and marriage, to give way to more active and transformative expressions. Dominant forms of indigenous masculinities have been based on elderly-wisdom power arrangements; however the trajectory of transnational migration is seeing them give way to a masculinity represented by the younger "brave" and experienced migrant.

Abbreviations

CDI	Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas (National Comision for the Development of Indigenous Population).
CONAPO	Consejo Nacional de Población (National Council of Population)
CONAPRED	Consejo Nacional para Prevenir la Discriminación (National Council to Prevent Discrimination)
ICE	US Immigration and Custom Enforcement.
IMSS	Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social (Mexican Social Security Institute).
IOM	International Organisation of Migration.
INEGI	Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geografía e Informática (National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Information).
LICONSA	Leche Industrializada Conasupo S.A. de C.V (Social Milk Supply Programme).
PAN	Partido Acción Nacional (National Action Party).
PRD	Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Party of the Democratic Revolution).
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party).
SAGARPA	Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentación (Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food).
SEDESOL	Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (Secretariat of Social Development).
SEP	Secretaría de Educación Pública (Secretariat of Public Education).
SRE	Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (Secretariat of International Affairs).
UN	United Nations.
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund.

UNPFII	United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.
US	United States.
WB	World Bank.

Glossary

Alcalde	Mayor. The person in charge of linking religious and ceremonial life with the municipal government
Atole	A traditional maize-based Mexican and Central American hot drink
Calenda	Parade
Cargo System	Customary law system. A cargo refers to a specific position or activity within the system
Cholos	Low income Mexican-American subculture and manner of dress
Cofradía	Confraternity. It is normally a Roman Catholic or Orthodox organization of lay people created for the purpose of looking after a specific saint (image). Members of a confraternity celebrate their specific saint every year through a party and religious activities
Coyote	Smuggler or cross border facilitator
Curado	A distilled alcoholic beverage made from different plants. Curado is very similar to Mezcal
El Norte	The north. Referring to The United States of America
El otro lado	On the other side. Referring to The United States of America
Guelaguetza	A traditional institution of economic exchange, referring to delayed exchanges of equivalent goods or services in equivalent context
Hierbalife	A global nutrition, weight-loss and skin care company. Herbalife has a multi-level marketing model business based on distributors. Distributors earn profits from products sales and from sales by their down line distributors
La Migra	US Border Patrol
LICONSA Shop	Industrialised Milk Conasupo (Leche Industrializada Conasupo S.A. de C.V.) LICONSA shops are small corner shops supported by the federal government where product are offered at more affordable prices

Mandarlos traer	Ask them to come or meet
Mayordomo	Annual Celebration Sponsor
Mezcal	A distilled alcoholic beverage made from the maguey plant (a form of agave, <i>Agave americana</i>) native to Mexico
Molino	Mill
Mozo	General helper or courier
Oportunidades	Opportunities. Referring to the Mexican federal government social assistance to rural communities
Paisano	A person from the same town or country
Papeles	The lawful way of living in the US such as having a residence permit, a job visa or citizenship
Parcela	Piece of land where a peasant cultivates a series of products. In a parcela the main product is maize alongside squash, beans and pumpkin flowers, among others
Por el cerro	Crossing the border through the mountains
Por la línea	Crossing the border through the border and customs
Presidente Municipal	Municipal president
Regidore(s)	Officer
Tamales	A dish made of maize dough, which is steamed in a maize leaf
Telesecundaria	A system of distance education programs for secondary and high school students created by the government of Mexico and available in rural areas of the country
Tequio	The base of the customary law system. Every citizen of a specific town should work for his/her community. A tequio does not imply a monetary remuneration
Tejate	A maize and cocoa beverage traditionally made in Oaxaca.
Tlayuda	A handmade traditional Mexican dish consisting of a large, thin, crunchy, partially toasted tortilla
Topil	A kind of police officer but without guns. Topiles carry a

stick that symbolises authority

70 y mas

70 and more. Referring to the Mexican federal government social assistance to citizens aged 70 years old or more

Chapter 1. Introduction

A few weeks before my great-grandmother, Altagracia, died in 1996 my mother and I visited her in the little isolated town of El Saltito where she lived all her life. At that time, she was 91 years old and had a relative looking after her full time. Even though she was not able to do any household work, she would still wear an apron over her dress. “Why do you dress in an apron, granny?”, I asked. “It is a custom, I guess. I have worn it all my life”, she answered. That apron permanently attached to her clothes symbolised what she assumed about herself: a constant subject of household duties. My great-grandmother never went to school and she did not know how to read or write. She got married and had her first child when she was 13 years old, and before her 40th birthday she had 14 children. Altagracia was an indigenous Mexican woman who, as many other women, lived under the customs and traditions of her town and family. Following what she learnt, she did not allow her daughters to go to school and sent them to work as maids and nannies in Mexico City.

For many years I questioned the kind of life that my great-grandmother had and gave to her daughters, but later on I realised that her story was just one of many and still experienced by some indigenous women today. In a so-called post-feminist era, where women apparently ‘navigate’ in an equality context (see McRobbie 2008), Mexican indigenous communities might seem untouched by such ideas. Nonetheless, in the last decade a wave of changes has been detected in the lives of indigenous women - and indigenous people in general - and one of the most determining factors appears to be the migration of their male relatives. My great-grandmother was born too early to experience the migration of her husband, or to be *de facto* head of household; however this is now a reality for many indigenous women.

Three under-researched aspects within the Mexico-United States (US) migration¹ scholarship: indigenous migration; gender; and their link with empowerment, are the axes that guide this thesis. For many years extensive Mexico-US migration scholarship assumed that Mexican migrants were rural men who speak Spanish, eat tortillas, drink tequila and work doing what many US citizens considered “unwanted jobs” (Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004b). Historically most Mexican migrants were indeed *mestizo*² men (Hernández-Díaz 2011a) and did share common characteristics, but over the last three decades the Mexican migrant population to the US has shown considerable diversification along ethnic and gender lines.

In terms of ethnicity, in 2004 *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States* (Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004), a cutting-edge study, presented a compilation of empirical and conceptual studies that made visible the multi-ethnic aspect of Mexico-US migration by incorporating the little studied phenomenon of what Cengel (2013) calls the “other kind of Mexicans”. This group of studies challenged the stereotype of indigenous people as dominated populations without agency (Clifford 2007) and the idea that the characteristics of indigenous people - e.g. permanence and immobility (Cadena and Starn 2007, Yescas Angeles 2008, Weber 2008) - did not make them subjects of migration. Since the publication of the book, most of the studies on indigenous Mexican migration to the US have focused their attention on the social, cultural, and civic impacts of this “kind” of migration, as well as the formation and transformation of ethnic identities among migrants.

¹ Migration is defined as the movement from one place to another to live temporarily; immigration refers to people who have come to a different country in order to live permanently (Castles and Miller, 2003). However, according to Fox and Rivera-Salgado (2004) indigenous Mexican migrants return to their town of origin at least once in their lives due to their customs. Thus, recognizing that the line that divides migration and immigration is difficult to establish, I shall use these terms interchangeably.

² In Mexico, *mestizo* refers to the mix of European (mainly Spaniards) and indigenous people (Wade 2004).

This thesis uses the concept of transnationalism to analyse the characteristics of indigenous Mexican migration. Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc (1994) define transnationalism as the “processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (p. 6). The links created between indigenous migrants and their communities of origin have been documented by research which argues that most indigenous migrants retain ties through monetary contributions for development projects and through meetings in hometown associations (see Fitzgerald 2004, Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004b, Hulshof 1991, Kearney 2004, Kearney and Besserer 2004). However, this research complicates these findings and argues that the strength of the ties between indigenous migrants and their communities depends on their destination (national or international). Even when migration is a long established practice, bridges between communities of origin and destination might not be well developed if the migrants themselves find “uncomplicated” ways to visit their communities.

In terms of gender, the idea that the migrant was “naturally” a man was further questioned by a group of researchers who take gender as a central organising principle of migration (e.g. Chant 1992, Grasmuck and Pessar 1991, Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994 and 2003, Mahler 2003, Pessar and Mahler 2001) and not only as an “added” variable to be measured. When gender is brought to the fore in migration studies a host of significant topics emerge. These include how and why women and men experience migration differently and how this contrast affects such processes as settlement, return and migration (Dannecker 2005). Therefore, it is precisely because of the many ways in which gender and migration interact and influence each other that it is important to theorise and analyse the role of gender in migratory

spaces and movements. Social practices and activities are not gender-neutral. On the contrary, gender - i.e. gender identities, subjectivities, discourses and practices - structures the phenomenon of migration in a dialectic process, thus in return, migration re-structures gender (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). This research analyses the re-configuration of gender relations not only in the household (private) arena, but also in the economic, community and State (public) arenas. Differentiating these arenas makes it possible to assess whether progressive changes in gender relations in one arena are replicated in other arena or whether there is imbalance, in that progressive change in one arena is not matched across the board.

In terms of empowerment, this is understood as a process of change in power relations in favour of those at lower levels in a given hierarchy (Sen and Batliwala 2000). Some recent studies have observed a greater involvement of indigenous Mexican women in the political and civil life in their communities due to the migration of their male relatives and have implied that this increased female participation might be a sign of women's emancipation or empowerment (Hernández-Díaz and Carreño 2007, Juan Martínez 2013, Perry *et al.* 2009, Velásquez Cepeda 2004, Vázquez García 2011). However greater participation is not in itself equivalent to empowerment (Sen and Batliwala 2000, p. 21), and this thesis questions this positive discourse and advocates for a careful look at the social context and the differences between women (e.g. age and civil status) within the same community. Also of interest is the empowerment or otherwise of Mexican migrants, most of whom are male. Research has documented the many adversities that indigenous Mexicans face while migrating - internally or internationally - and entering socially stratified labour markets that diminish and even criminalise the value and worth of migrants' presence (see Cohen 2009, París 2008, Ramirez 2011,

Stephen 2008). Notwithstanding these adversities, it is worth looking closely at the resources, agency and achievements of indigenous migrants to assess their prospects for empowerment.

1.1 Focus of the research

This thesis presents inter-disciplinary work on indigenous Mexican migration from a gender perspective and analyses the link with empowerment from two angles: for those who physically migrate and, especially; for those who stay in the communities of origin. Moreover, this thesis explores, compares and questions the internal and external (international) migratory movements of two indigenous communities located in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico and their social impacts on both sides of the border. Although this work pays more attention to international migration, internal migration is also observed as a way to understand pathways to external migration.

Oaxaca is located on the southern Pacific coast of Mexico and is home to more than 2.3 million indigenous people (INEGI 2010) divided into 18 ethno-linguistic groups (CDI 2011). This research focuses on the two most populous, the Zapotecs and Mixtecs. Despite the social development programmes that the Mexican federal government has recently deployed in the region, Oaxaca remains one of the poorest areas in Mexico, a situation that has kept its indigenous population largely neglected and excluded (Cornelius *et al.* 2011, Nolasco and Rubio 2005). In the 1980s in search of better opportunities, indigenous people from Oaxaca joined, in significant numbers³, the national migration stream towards the US (Hernández-Díaz 2011a). It is estimated that over 685,000 Mixtec and Zapotec indigenous people have migrated

³ According to Hernández-Díaz (2011a), indigenous migration from Oaxaca to the US started in the 1940s however it was not until 1980s that this kind of migratory movement boomed.

to the US (Cengel 2013), mostly to work in agriculture and service sectors (López and Rusten 2004, París 2008, Stephen 2008).

Two styles of administrative, electoral and governmental systems “with a specific cultural background” (Hernández-Díaz 2010, p. 17) overlap and coexist in Oaxaca: political parties and customary law (*usos y costumbres*). Both systems, but especially the so-called *usos y costumbres*, have generally excluded female participation. However, “things are changing”, apparently in part due to the high levels of male migration reported in many indigenous communities; indigenous female participation in these systems has increased, especially in activities that were previously reserved for men (Juan Martínez 2013, Perry *et al.* 2009, Velásquez Cepeda 2004).

The great majority of indigenous Mexican migrants are still men of reproductive age (Cohen *et al.* 2009). As a consequence, many children, the elderly and women remain in the community of origin, a situation that, in one way or another, has forced a re-accommodation of the gender regimes of indigenous communities. Hence, the lack of male inhabitants appears to have opened up greater participation opportunities for indigenous women and a greater influence in the decision-making process in the public and private arena of their communities.

This complex but interesting panorama sets the context for this thesis which poses the following three main research questions: (a) How is the transnational migration of indigenous Mexican (Mixtecs and Zapotecs) migrants to the US and urban areas of Mexico gendered?, (b) How is transnational migration of indigenous Mexicans (Mixtecs and Zapotecs) to the US and urban areas of Mexico re-constructing gender relations of both indigenous communities in Mexico and the diaspora (in the US and

in urban Mexico)?, and finally (c) Is transnational migration empowering, and for whom?

These questions are examined using a multi-sited ethnographic research methodology comprising in-depth interviews and participant observation as the main methods of data collections in the Mixtec indigenous community of Santiago Cacaloxtepec (Cacaloxtepec) and in the Zapotec indigenous community of San Bartolomé Quialana (Quialana); as well as in the outskirts of Mexico City and the cities of Los Angeles, Anaheim, Stockton, Madera and Fresno, California, US (popular destinations among Zapotec and Mixtec indigenous migrants).

1.2 Contribution of the study

There are several characteristics which make this thesis distinctive: a study within the field of Mexico-US transnational migration that takes gender as the main and central organising principle of migration but also takes care to disaggregate gender categories; an ambitious comparative analysis of two indigenous groups which does not start from the assumption that all Mexican indigenous people experience migration in the same way; and a methodology that ‘travels’ following migrants’ pathways, but also pays attention not only to those who physically migrate but to non-migrants.

Transformations in gender relations in both public and private arenas are analysed and presented by dividing the female population into three age/generational groups and being attuned to other important differences between women. This thesis argues that transformation of gender relations differs depending on the age of the subjects, their civic status and on the place where they operate (private/public, community of origin/destination). Moreover, previous understandings and expressions of gender

identities - i.e. masculinities and femininities - are also shown to be changing. Although gender relations and identities are always in a constant process of being made and remade, transnational migration is a factor that tends to accelerate changes and question previous practices (de Haas and van Rooij 2010). By carefully disentangling any easy assumptions that transnational male migration results in women's empowerment, this research demonstrates the value of both theorizing empowerment and of paying attention to other social and political processes at work alongside migration.

Living in the migrants' communities of origin and following them across spatial, cultural and physical borders (Bartolomé 2008) has enabled the generation of data that can capture "both sides of the coin" and research what pushes some to migrate, others to stay and all to be impacted by migration and to cohabit in a transnational space. A key strength of the research lies in the rich empirical data generated by the 12 month multi-sited ethnographic methodology, highlighting different migrant trajectories, looking at events from different locations and making connections or noting distinctive discourses from site to site (Gallo 2009, Pasura 2008). While the particular case studies are particular to this thesis, the research questions, methodology and theoretical framework used can be applied more broadly to further the research of empowerment and transnational migration from a gender perspective.

1.3 Thesis structure

This thesis is organised in nine chapters. Following this introductory chapter, the second chapter presents the literature review, which situates the research in the various relevant fields of knowledge, explains and justifies the theoretical

framework used in this work and poses the research questions. The literature review includes that on gender and migration; Mexican indigenous migration; the socio-political organization of indigenous communities in Mexico; indigeneity; transnationalism and gender; and empowerment.

Chapter three discusses the methodology and methods of research chosen and the tools and contacts used to get access to respondents in Santiago Cacaloxtpec, San Bartolomé Quialana, and the diaspora are also discussed. The multi-sited ethnographic methodology is based on in-depth interviews and participant observation, and so this chapter shows how these were carried out and how many participants took part in the interviews. The circumstances and challenges of the fieldwork in both communities and in different countries are considered, as well as my position as a researcher, and how the gender and ethnicity of the researcher might open or close doors while doing social research.

Chapter four introduces the Mexican state of Oaxaca and the two indigenous communities studied, Santiago Cacaloxtpec and San Bartolomé Quialana. A historical overview of both communities, their geographical location and general characteristics (such as traditions and customs) are presented, as well as a careful documentation of the style of government - political parties or customary law - that each community uses, how it is structured and the recent transformations that both systems have experienced. The chapter highlights the importance of understanding migrants' place of origin while studying transnational migration and its impact.

Chapter five considers the gendered vintage and current patterns of migration of Cacaleño and Quilaneses⁴ men and women⁵. This chapter discusses the economic factors, *inter alia*, that promote Cacaleño' and Quilaneses' migration, and the shift in their communities of destination (from national to international) and jobs (from agriculture to the service sector). This chapter argues that indigenous migration from Cacaloxtotec and Quilana is gendered and transnational, and that in both communities men are still assumed to be the ideal subjects of migration, especially when that migration is international. For indigenous men migration has become almost a requirement in their transition to manhood. However, this chapter also shows that currently migration is not a rite of passage exclusively for men; in both communities young indigenous women are expected to leave their communities to go and work in the service sector (e.g. as cleaners or nannies) of urban Mexico. Finally, an analysis of the transnational links created between the diaspora (in urban Mexico and in the US) and the communities of Santiago Cacaloxtotec and San Bartolomé Quilana contradicts the argument that social and cultural ties (i.e. hometown associations) are critical to successful migrations and creation of jobs among indigenous Mexican migrants (see Cohen 2009). Specifically, the case of Cacaloxtotec shows that "uncomplicated" access to the community of origin discourages the establishment of social and cultural ties.

Chapter six explores how gender relations and gender inequities are currently structured and perpetuated in both indigenous communities and in the diaspora, and how they are subject to change as a result of transnational migration. To carry out

⁴ "Cacaleño(s)" refers to people from Santiago Cacaloxtotec and "Quilaneses(s)" to people from San Bartolomé Quilana.

⁵ During this work I will also use the term "Cacaleño" and "Quilaneses" indistinctly to refer to their indigenous ethnic identity. To distinguish indigenous people from other Mexicans I will use the term *mestizo*.

this task this section uses Bina Agarwal's (1994) "bargaining" approach, which analyses gender relations in the private (household) and in the public (market, community and the State) arenas. Looking at these different arenas provides a more comprehensive picture in the analysis of change in gender relations. The ethnographic fieldwork data from the indigenous communities is examined from the indigenous women's perspective but at the same time it is recognized that not all indigenous women are the same even if they come from the same community. The female respondents are broken down into three age groups: 50 plus, 25-49 year olds and 17-24 years old. This break down allow us to see what, if any, difference age and generation makes to changes in gender relations; in fact it is women aged 25-49 who have experienced the most progressive change. The ethnographic fieldwork data from the diaspora is not disaggregated by age (due to the smaller sample) and demonstrates greater equality and a more even division of labour as a result of migration.

Chapter seven focuses on the transformation of gender identities (masculinities and femininities) in the communities of origin due to transnational migration. It is argued that Cacaleño and Quialanense masculinities have abandoned their dominant expression, "honour-age-prestige", to give way to a masculinity represented by the brave migrant, and also its variations. In terms of femininity the chapter explores how Cacaleño and Quialanense traditional femininities are being gradually transformed, indirectly through transnational migration, with some indigenous women becoming key actors within their communities.

Chapter eight analyses the link between transnational migration and empowerment, using Naila Kabeer's (2001) analytic framework of empowerment. Like chapter six,

this section analyses empowerment and transnational migration based on the experiences of indigenous women in their communities and those of men and women in the diaspora. Moreover, this chapter argues that greater female participation in the public life of their communities should not be automatically interpreted as empowerment, as previous research has suggested. Indigenous women might have greater economic resources due to economic remittances and even greater social resources, such as the right to vote; however in some cases women do not wish to take advantage of the set of resources obtained, and as a consequence they have not translated these resources into definitive transformative outcomes (achievements) in their lives. At the diaspora, indigenous men and women have found spaces to improve their lives and the lives of those who depend on them in their communities of origin, however their clandestine status leaves them in a very fragile position.

Finally, chapter nine presents the overall conclusions of this research, addressing each research question in terms, and assesses the implications for the literature on gender, empowerment and transnational migration. Suggestions for further research are also made.

Chapter 2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the relevant literature, situate this study within it, and explain the choice of conceptual framework. The chapter is divided into six sections. The first cites the relevant literature on gender and the importance of incorporating gender as a central aspect of migration studies. This section establishes that this thesis uses the concept of gender as a social construct in a dialectic process whereby gender shapes migration, and in return, migration reshapes gender. The second section introduces the literature on indigenous Mexican migration, and the third section describes the socio-political characteristics of indigenous communities and their operational system, the so-called *cargo* system. The third section also establishes how this thesis understands the contested term 'indigenous'. The fourth section proposes the engendering of transnationalism as a framework to understand the changes and challenges faced in the indigenous communities due to migration. The fifth section establishes the theoretical framework for the analysis of the link between migration and empowerment. Finally, the research questions that guide this work are presented.

2.2 Gender and Migration

Many scholars agree that gender is a central organising principle of migrant life, that migration affects men and women differently, and that it alters relations between them (Castellanos and Boehm 2008, Dannecker 2005, Donato *et al.* 2006, Gallo 2008, Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003, Levitt *et al.* 2003). The attempt to bring gender into migration has had to struggle with the assumption that migrants largely consist of male workers (Erman 1997, DeLaet 1999, Phizacklea 1998, Raijman *et al.* 2003, Rojas Wiesner and Ángeles Cruz 2008), ignoring historically the role played by female migrants. The first attempt to include female migrants in migration research

emerged in the 1970s and early 1980s (Morokvasic 1983). In this first stage, research tried to remedy the exclusion of women in migration by a simplistic “add and stir” approach (Willis and Yeoh 2000, p. xi), whereby women were added as a variable or comparative measure with their male counterparts (Donato *et al.* 2006). Nevertheless, a distinctive second phase of research emerged in the early 1990s with the publication of Sylvia Chant’s (1992) influential book *Gender and Migration in Developing countries*. In this phase gender started to be recognized as a set of social practices shaping and shaped by migration (Boehm 2008, Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 2003). The “household/family” was the main subject of this phase. Another important aspect of this second phase is the attention that is given to the ways in which men’s and women’s lives are constrained and enabled by gender discourses and also the ways in which gender relations become, up to a point, more egalitarian through the process of migration (see Brown 1983, Chant and Radcliffe 1992, Erman 1997, Lund Skar 1993). Although this stage brought gender to the fore in migration studies, one of its weaknesses was the assumption that gender is almost exclusively observable in social institutions, such as the family (Silvey 2006). The main issue with this assumption is that not only are social institutions gendered, but other important arenas key to migration research as well - such as labour markets, migration policy, and citizenship. A third stage of feminist scholarship on migration has picked up the overlooked concepts of the second phase and started to theorize gender as a key constitutive element of migration (Mahler and Pessar 2006, Piper 2008).

Theorizing gender as a central and core element of migration studies is a crucial factor in our understanding of the origin, causes and consequences of the migratory phenomenon. Gender is about power:

[M]ajor areas of life - including sexuality, family, education, economy, and the state - are organised according to gender principles and infiltrated with conflicting interests and hierarchies of power and privilege (Glenn 1999, p. 5 cited in Pessar and Mahler 2001).

Gender may be seen as a construction based around the “two sexes biological reality” (Mahler and Pessar 2006) that consequently organizes our actions, positions and behaviour in society - unequally because it tends to favour men (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003). Gender and sex are not synonyms (Holmes 2007, Hughes 2002). Sex is a biological classification⁶ whereas gender is socially constructed, made, crafted and performed by its actors - men and women - in time and place (Ortner 1996, Kondo 1990, cited in Boehm 2008, Connell 2009). Given that gender is constructed and shaped by social structures (Alsop *et al.* 2002), research has shifted away from claiming that men and women are simply ‘naturally’ different to an increasingly accepted perspective that recognises how masculinities and femininities in themselves are relational categories which are in constant relation and reconfiguration to one another (Castellanos and Boehm 2008, Donato *et al.* 2006, Holmes 2007, Salzinger 2003).

However, one cannot theorize gender as a universal or singular category (McCall 2005). One must also look at how notions of race and class, among other sites of *difference*, are “gendered” and how gender is in turn “racialised” and “classed” (Browne and Joya 2003). The importance of how race, class and gender are intimately related is further taken up by the feminist theory of intersectionality, which refers to the interaction between gender, race and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies, and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power (Davis

⁶ While this is a common definition, others such as Butler have argued that “sex” is also socially constructed (Alsop *et al.* 2002).

2008). In the case of migration, intersectionality emphasizes the interactions and dynamics in destination and origin countries and the stratification of societies that migrants leave or enter (Piper 2008).

Gender is thus a key feature in the migratory process. Among other issues, the power of gender shapes who migrates and how, why they migrate at all, who stays behind, and why migrants are channelled into different occupations (Sinke 2006). As Donato *et al.* (2006, p. 6) have pointed out: “[t]he entire migration process is [...] a gendered phenomenon”.

Having described the process of recognizing gender in the study of migration, this thesis uses the concept of gender as a social construct in a dialectic process (Connell 2009, Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 2003) where gender plays a key role in shaping migration, but at the same time migration itself plays a key role in constituting gender relations. This theoretical framework will be used to analyse the indigenous Mexican migration (internal and international), the literature on which is reviewed below.

2.3 Indigenous Mexican Migration

One of the largest sustained international flows of migrants in the world is from Mexico to the US (Massey and Taylor 2004, Massey *et al.* 2005). Mexican migration history has no beginning (Anzaldúa 1999, Bartolomé 2008); as a popular Mexican band mentions in one of its songs: “we [Mexicans] did not cross the border [Mexico-US], the border crossed us”⁷. Mexican migrants in the US are still widely assumed by US and Mexican policy makers, as well as by the general public, to be an ethnically homogeneous population (Cengel 2013, Fox 2004, Velasco Ortiz

⁷ “Somos más Americanos” (We are real Americans). Popular Mexican song interpreted by Los Tigres del Norte.

2008). In the mid-twentieth century, studies on Mexican migration to the US identified all migrants simply as Mexican *mestizo* peasants expelled from their farms looking for better living conditions in “el otro lado” (beyond the border) (Cardoso 1980, Galarza 1964, Gamio 1971, see also Gravitt 2008). In fact, there is a record of indigenous men migrating to the US from the 1930s and then under the auspices of the Bracero Programme⁸ (Bogardus 1934, Gambio 1971 cited in Weber 2008, Hoover 1930). However, the characteristics ascribed to indigenous people - e.g. permanence and immobility (de la Cadena and Starn 2007, Yescas Angeles 2008) - did not allow them to be recognized as subjects of migration⁹. Even today, indigenous people in Mexico are related with the country side, with folkloric traditions and with those who are “a pernicious vestige of the past, a living expression of barbarity” (Bengoa 1985, p. 135 cited in Richards 2005).

A rather new area within Mexico-US migration scholarship has now started to explore and disentangle the indigenous component of Mexican migrants, challenging the idea of ethnic homogeneity and uniformity in migration experiences (see Cornelius *et al.* 2009, Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004b, Stephen 2007, Velasco Ortíz 2008). Paying particular attention to the formation and transformation of ethnic identities and their impacts in the places of origin and destination, indigenous Mexican migration is a growing but heretofore little studied phenomenon.

⁸ The Bracero Programme was a bilateral agreement between Mexico and U.S. for the importation of temporary Mexican labourers, and ran from 1942 to 1964.

⁹ It is important to mention that the 1940-1960s Chicano Movement in the U.S. partially recaptured the indigenous element previously denied or diluted by Mexican immigrants and Mexican-U.S. migration scholarship (see Anzaldúa 1999). The movement referred to an indigenous past based on the supremacy of the Aztec Empire, mainly, and the Spanish legacy that together made up the Mexican national identity (Cooper 2009, Weber 2008). Notwithstanding this, the Chicano Movement did not recognize indigeneity as a present element of the Mexican.

The Mexican industrial boom of the 1930s encouraged, and in some cases forced, the first mass migration of indigenous men and women to Mexican cities (Gabbart and Clarke 2010, Oehmichen Bazán 2005). In the late 1980s, the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and government welfare policies¹⁰ (Molyneux 2007) pressured indigenous people (especially Mixtecs and Triquis) to extend their area of migration from urban centres to export-agricultural regions in the south and north of the country (Sinaloa, Sonora, Baja California and Veracruz). Later, the settlement of indigenous population in the north western area of Mexico, where until today the largest export-agricultural production zone is located, created a key stepping stone for international border crossing, mainly of men (Velasco Ortiz 2005).

The stepping stone created by migrant indigenous communities in the north western cities of Mexico, coupled with the US Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, opened a gateway for indigenous Mexican people into the US labour market. With the IRCA many undocumented Mexican *mestizo*¹¹ migrants already living in the US could regularise their migratory status, which favoured their social mobility from agriculture to the service sector (Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004, París 2008). Mexican indigenous migrants - mostly men and especially those without work permits who are therefore largely undocumented - have slowly replaced the Mexican *mestizos* who found better paid jobs, particularly in the service sector

¹⁰ According to Molyneux (2007) and Fox and Rivera-Salgado (2004), the neo-liberal economic approach that the Mexican government assumed in this decade aimed to reduce the rural proportion of the national population. This 'surplus' rural population was supposed to move to the cities, in order to keep industrial wages down, and to attract foreign investment.

¹¹ I use the term Mexican *mestizos* only to distinguish them from the mass migration of indigenous Mexicans registered at the end of the 1980s. I do not assume that the previous undocumented Mexicans were only *mestizos*, as some indigenous Mexican migrants also regularised their status within IRCA (see Stephen 2007, p. 12). As previously mentioned, historical records point to the presence of indigenous people in earlier migration flows to the US.

(Hulshof 1991). Hence, since the 1980s studies have revealed that over 100,000 indigenous Mexican people were in the US working, most notably, in the agricultural labour force of California and increasingly in Texas, Florida, New York and Oregon (López and Rusten 2004, Stephen 2008).

But how is the term indigenous, at least in the Mexican context, understood? How is it possible to differentiate a Mexican *mestizo* migrant from an indigenous one? Given that the term indigenous is a rather contested concept in itself, the following section defines what is understood in this thesis as indigenous.

2.4 The term *indigenous* and the socio-political organisation of indigenous communities in Mexico.

The term *indigenous* has its origin in Christopher Columbus' mistaken geography while trying to find a faster route to India; in 1492 he recorded his first encounter with native people of the Caribbean islands, whom he named "indigenous" (Nagel 2003, p. 63). With the arrival of the Europeans and through the colonisation process, native people of the Americas (indigenous) went through a process of economic marginalisation, impoverishment and social demoralisation which made them ethnically "inferior", perceived as naïve, childlike, primitive in their technology and cooperative, to be educated by the "discoverers" (Ibid, p. 67).

Even though Mexico obtained its independence from Spain in 1821¹² the modern Mexican state was not established until the start of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, when the post-colonial elites were removed from the government. During and after the Mexican Revolution, Mexico fought to create a modern national identity which took a mixed-race character: the *mestizo* (mixed-race). The creation of the *mestizo* emerges as an official discourse of nation formation that denies colonial forms of

¹² Mexico obtained its independence in 1821 following a war of independence started in 1810.

racial and ethnic oppression by constructing an intermediate subject and interrelating him/her as 'the citizen' (Mallon 1996 cited in Wade 2005, p. 241). However, while modern Mexico constructed and celebrated mixed-race national identity as the newly Mexican identity, indigenous people continued to be segregated in their long history of exploitation and domination.

In the Mexican construction of mixed-race everyone was eligible to become a *mestizo* (Wade 2005). However, in reality becoming a *mestizo* meant, and still means, to construct an ethnic boundary through cultural moves (such as speaking only Spanish) and ethnic transitions (Bartolomé 2006 [1997]) in order to symbolically "cease" to be indigenous and symbolically become "white" (Alonso 1995).

It is difficult to know the exact number of indigenous people in Mexico. The only indicator that the Mexican State uses to estimate the indigenous population is through ethnolinguistic groups (Hernández-Díaz 2010). These groups share cultural and political characteristics that, according to the Mexican state, are particular to indigenous people (i.e. style of government and tradition). Thus, according to the 2010 census (INEGI 2010) around 6.6 million people or 6 percent of the Mexican population speak an indigenous language but 15.7 million people considered themselves indigenous (around 13 percent of the population).

Despite their numbers, Mexico's economic and social model has almost no place for indigenous people. More than five centuries have passed since the European conquest yet the Mexican government, presiding over a multi-ethnic and multicultural population, continues to make policies - educational, cultural and social - that hide and discriminate against an important part of the population, so that

these people are restricted to work as the agro-export labour force or as ‘tourist attractions’ (Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004a). Despite being a country with more than sixty eight different languages (Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 2006¹³), the *de facto*, yet not official, language is Spanish and indigenous co-nationals are often considered to be second class citizens: they are “indios” and “primitive”¹⁴ (Novelo, 2001:161; see also Melesio-Nolasco, n.d. and Castellanos, 2008).

In this thesis I use the term *indigenous* people, *indigenous* men and *indigenous* women instead of countryside Mexican, rural Mexican or just Mexican because I argue, following Fenton (1999), that the people on whom I based my fieldwork have “real or perceived differences of ancestry, culture and language” (p. 6) which are mobilised in social transactions and interactions which differ from the rest (i.e. *mestizos*) of the Mexican society.

Moreover, while I do observe the possible physical differences between indigenous people and non-indigenous (i.e. the former tend to be shorter and darker), I decline to accept that these differences are determinant of indigenous people’s life courses and outcomes. Of significance for this thesis are the social meanings attributed to being indigenous in Mexico, rather than the differences themselves. In this light I treat the term indigenous as an ethnic identity.

Indigenous people and indigenous communities express their culture and customs through their distinctive political and ceremonial organisation. However not all

¹³ For more details see, “The Indigenous Language Catalogue”, published by the National Institute of Indigenous Languages (INALI in Spanish).

¹⁴ “Indio” is the pejorative adjective that the rest of the Mexican *mestizo* population give to their indigenous co-nationals. Some other words, like huarachudo, indio apestoso, naco, Tlaxcalteca, indios pata rajada, indios bajados a tamborazos, calzonudos, Filemones, sombreroños, paisanitos, Tlapanecos, paísa, among others, also refer to indigenous people.

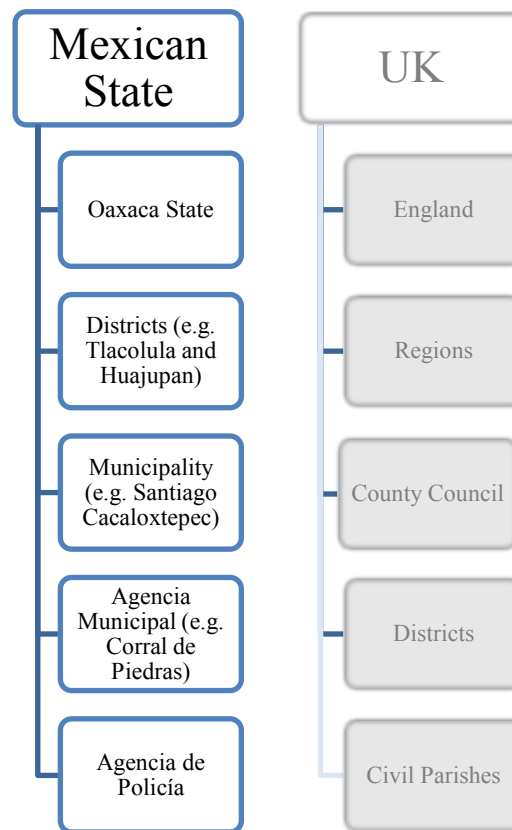
indigenous communities have the same style of political and ceremonial organisation. For this thesis, I explore two “styles” in two different communities located in the Mexican state of Oaxaca that self-identify (and are also considered by the Mexican government) as indigenous. One of the communities (San Bartolomé Quialana) is ruled by customary law; and the second community (Santiago Cacaloxtotec) is ruled by political parties but strongly influenced by customary law. The following section describes the two distinctive political systems, the importance of the so-called customary law, its role in the migratory movement, and its gender aspects.

2.4.1 Political organisation in Oaxaca, customary law and the cargo system

In Oaxaca there are two styles of governance or types of “electoral system with a specific cultural background” (Hernández-Díaz 2010, p. 17 my translation), which in some cases overlap and coexist: political parties and customary law. Out of the 570 municipalities (see Figure 1)¹⁵ that exist in Oaxaca, 418 elect their body of governance by customary law (Vázquez García 2011). The 570 municipalities that make up Oaxaca are characterised for being small in population which, in part, is due to the geography of the state itself, its multi ethnic constituency and the diverse social and political organisations that make Oaxacan municipalities a source of cultural richness, but also a source of social and political contradictions. According to Hernández-Díaz (2007a), the current structure of the Oaxacan municipalities is an outcome of the kind of organisation imposed on the native population during Spanish colonisation, which then continued after the Mexican Revolution in 1910.

¹⁵ Further explanation about the organisation of the political-administrative organisation in Mexico in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Political-Administrative Organisation in Mexico



Note: Mexico is a federation of states and every Mexican state is divided into municipalities, and although every state is independent, all in aggregate are part of the Mexican Federal State. State leaders (governors) and municipal leaders called municipal president (presidente municipal) are chosen independently and each municipality has a municipal council or body of officers who are responsible for providing general services and good administration to the dwellers who live in a municipality. Moreover some municipalities have under their domain small villages called agencias and agencias de policía, which might be the equivalent of the English districts and civil parishes. (The comparison between the political organisation of the Mexican State and the United Kingdom is provided to aid understanding).

Several authors (Acosta Márquez 2007; Anaya Muñoz 2005, 2006; Bartolomé 1997, 2006; Bautista 2007, Hernández-Díaz 2007a, 2010) have studied the two styles of governance and have agreed that these are not uniform throughout all Oaxacan communities¹⁶. Every town has its own specific characteristics which have been

¹⁶ In this thesis, community is defined as “the ideological and material constructions, whose boundaries, structures and norms are a result of constant processes of struggles and negotiations, or more general social development” (Yuval-Davis 1997, p. 8). For the specific case of Oaxaca, when I mention the term community I refer to the political delimitation (municipality) defined by Oaxaca state. For the specific case of Quialana and Cacaloxtepec, I will use the term municipality, town and community indistinctly.

shaped not only by the communities' own social context but also by the interactions of the communities themselves with local, national and international arenas. Customary law regimes also vary based on indigenous communities' specific characteristics, such as: religious preferences, educational achievements and migration.

In fact not all Oaxacan communities ruled under customary law have a majority indigenous population. Only in approximately 136 municipalities - out of the 418 - ruled under the customary law system do over 80 percent of the population speak an indigenous language. In 167 communities ruled under customary law, only 20 percent of the population speak an indigenous language (Durand 2007 cited in Vázquez García 2011, p. 29)¹⁷. Moreover not all municipalities that are ruled under customary law are rural and isolated; some of these communities are located on the outskirts of the City of Oaxaca and are considered urban (Durand 2007)¹⁸.

Customary law is executed through the so-called *cargo system* (non-paid duty system), which is based on the committed participation of male citizens in several indigenous and semi-indigenous communities of Mexico¹⁹ and Central America (Sarmiento Silva 2007, Sieder 1997). This system has been recognised by the

¹⁷ The law in the state of Oaxaca requires a minimum population of 15,000 to grant the status of municipality, however only 46 communities fulfil this requirement (Durand 2007, p. 19).

¹⁸ In accordance with paragraph 132 of the first chapter, book IV of the electoral code of Oaxaca (Código de Instituciones Políticas y Procedimientos Electorales del Estado de Oaxaca, CIPPEO), the requirements that a community/municipality should fulfil in order to be considered as governed under customary law are two: (a) express particular political institutions with specific internal rules or procedures to elect their own body of government in accordance with the constitution and rights of indigenous communities; (b) recognise the general assembly as the main consultative and designative body in the *cargo system* in order to integrate the town council.

¹⁹ The government of Mexico has classified indigenous communities in three main groups: a) Indigenous municipalities where more than 40% of the population is indigenous and speak an indigenous language; b) Municipalities with indigenous presence (semi-indigenous) where less than 40% of the population is indigenous but with more than 5 thousand indigenous; c) Municipalities with scattered indigenous population (CDI, 2009).

Mexican Constitution²⁰ and it is an autonomous regime that is carried out through several rituals which express the indigenous view of their community (Torres Cisneros 2002). Participation in this system is a requirement of town membership for all men who are married (Sánchez Montes and Barceló Quintal 2007). *Cargos* are also a source of status, prestige and recognition, and the responsibility of a *cargo* held is related to a person's experience and seniority (Gabarrot and Clarke 2011).

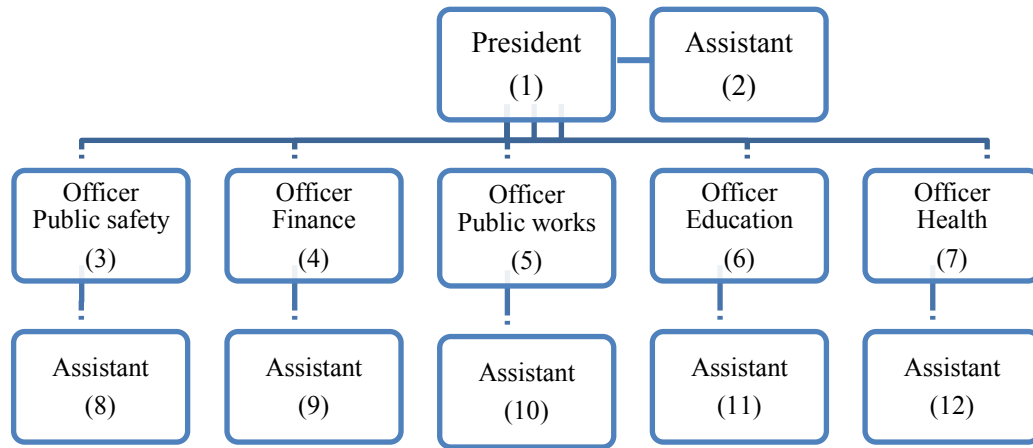
Contrary to the political party system where members of a community vote (or not) for their favoured candidate or political party, in communities ruled under customary law members are grouped in a general assembly and elect their representatives based on prestige and previous positions (aka *cargos*) that a citizen has carried out (Gabarrot and Clarke 2010, Perry *et al.* 2009). Single men and all women in most cases do not participate; they are represented by their most immediate married man (Ibid) (see Figure 2).

Every municipality organises their own election procedure, as well as deciding the place, the time and the date. At the end of the elections, a report is produced and delivered to the State Electoral Institute (*Instituto Estatal Electoral*, IEE). This institute will then validate the report and create official documentation recognising the election and the elected representatives. Those elected will then take office on the first of January and will be in office no more than three years²¹.

²⁰ Customary law has been recognized by the Mexican federal government through an agreement called 'Ley sobre Derechos y Cultura Indígena' (Law over Indigenous Rights and Culture) approved in 2001 by the Mexican Congress. Vicente Fox (Mexican president from 2000 to 2006) sent the initiative of law based in the Comisión de Concordia y Pacificación (Concord and Pacification Commission, COCOPA) to the Congress (Viqueira 2001).

²¹ In the case of Oaxaca, in 59 communities officers last for only one year, in one community they stay one and a half years, in two communities two years, and in the rest of the communities (330) for the full three years (Vázquez García 2011, p. 29).

Figure 2 Example of the Political Cargo System in a Mixtec Indigenous Community



Note: The individual who receives the most votes becomes president (position 1), first runner-up is assistant to the president (position 2), second runner-up is public safety officer (position 3) and so on. The positions here presented act in most cases as liaison officers between the indigenous community and the municipal-state-federal Mexican government.

Source: Perry *et al.* 2009, p. 213.

Although customary law regimes vary from community to community, there are basic characteristics that the regime shares. First at all, the potential officers should fulfil specific requirements; however those requirements are not written or established in a specific law but those who live in the community have learnt them from their predecessors or elders²². Appointed members for a cargo can refuse it, but those who refuse or avoid *cargos* might face exclusion from the community. One of the main reasons to refuse a *cargo* is the lack of payment; until 1998²³ no salary was offered. Nowadays those who perform political *cargos* (municipal president,

²² This kind of non-written law is what Dalton (2005, p. 52) calls “autochthonous law”, because the law is exercised by oral tradition.

²³ The payment was established along with the “Ramo 28” in 1998. Ramo 28 is the money that municipalities receive from the Mexican federal state to carry out their general activities (see Hernández-Díaz 2010, p. 47).

officers, etc.) receive a small monthly payment (in Spanish it is called *dieta*) of around 2,000 Pesos²⁴ (£ 100) (Bautista *et al.* 2007).

Even though specific people are designated to specific responsibilities, the entire community participate in the well-being of their town through the so-called *tequio*. *Tequio*²⁵ is an organised form of collective work performed by those who belong (or feel they belong) to the community for the benefit of the community, such as the construction or maintenance of school buildings, wells, roads, etc. *Tequio* is organised by the municipal government and performed by adult men and women without receiving any payment (Cohen 1999), although in Oaxaca, *tequio* activities can be deducted from tax contributions (Hernández-Díaz 2010, p. 41).

Specific public organisational tasks in the community government are handled by committees. Every committee has a president, a secretary and a treasurer. The number of committees varies according to the needs of the municipality. Some of the committees are permanent, such as the primary school or Catholic Church²⁶ committees. Others committees are established on an ad hoc basis, for example when the Church altarpiece is redecorated, a committee is formed to supervise.

2.4.2 Challenges and changes in the cargo system

The cargo system (as part of a customary law regime or political party competition), as with any other organisational structure, is not static or flawless and social phenomena (such as migration) have encouraged changes to the rules to adapt to

²⁴ “Pesos” refers to “Mexican Pesos” throughout the thesis.

²⁵ The word *tequio* comes from the náhuatl *tequitl* (work or tribute).

²⁶ This thesis uses the word Catholic to refer to the Roman Catholic Church.

new circumstances. Two clear examples of this are the position of “substitute”²⁷ and the introduction of salaries (*dietas*) in the customary law regime. Payment to cargo performers in a sense removed cargos’ honorary character; it was transformed from an unpaid service to the community to a position which brings economic reward. Thus, the federal budget allocated to municipalities has made political positions attractive as a source of accumulation and potential corruption.

Until about a decade ago, in most communities only married men born in the village were required - or allowed - to participate in the *cargo* system (Gabarrot and Clarke 2011, Velásquez 2004), excluding not only women but also non-married men and those who were not born in the community. In some other Oaxacan towns, men and women who reach 18 years old (coming of age in Mexico), independently of their civil status, are required and/or allowed to participate in the *cargo* system. However, there are still reports that municipalities ruled under customary law might still exclude those who belong to a non-Catholic group, those inhabitants from *agencias municipales*, long-term migrants, and those who were not born in the community (see the work edited by Hernández-Díaz 2007a).

Ways of carrying out general assemblies and electing representatives have also been adapted in relation to the size of the community and its necessities. In some towns people execute their votes by raising their hands in public, in others by marking with a stick on a blackboard and in others by “secretly whispering their choices” to the elders of the town (see Hernández-Díaz 2007b). In other communities, the election process-style is closer to the political party competition system where poll cards are used. Prestige and experience are still key characteristics for potential *cargo* holders,

²⁷ Initially in the cargo system the position of substitute did not exist. In Oaxaca the position was created by political parties in the 1970s and was later legislated by the state’s chamber of deputies in 1981 (Bautista *et al.* 2007).

but educational achievement and political contacts are qualities that have now also been incorporated into the profile of those chosen by the community.

Until recently there was no problem in fulfilling the requirements that the *cargo* system asked for. Inhabitants lived in a rural community dedicated to productive activities, such as agriculture or making handicraft, and every so often they would “serve” their communities through *cargo* activities. However the notion of the *cargo* system and its communitarian citizenship has been strongly disrupted by migratory movements.

Since indigenous migration remains primarily male (Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004a, p. 25), indigenous communities are losing local residents who are potential performers of the *cargo system* (Kearney and Besserer 2004, Velásquez Cepeda 2004). In response, community leaders might call male indigenous migrants residing in other parts of Mexico and in the US back to serve in their communities, or in some cases communities have modified their customary law²⁸. But the rather more interesting alternative is that indigenous leaders in some municipalities ruled under customary law not only “allow” women to vote (Perry *et al.* 2010) but also to stand for office, with some women having been elected, not only as members of committees or *tequio* performers but as government officers or even as municipal presidents (see Stephen 2007 and Vázquez García 2011).

In 1991, Lynn Stephen documented indigenous women’s exclusion from assembly meetings and *cargo* positions in the Zapotec community of Teotitlán del Valle. In her field research Stephen observed that almost all of the formal *cargo* positions

²⁸ Some communities have reduced the length of service of the cargo position, and others have eliminated positions, such as *topil* (general helper). For detail see Cornelius *et al.* (2009) and Gabarrot (2010).

were held by males, and that few women could even participate in traditionally female sectors such as kindergarten committees (p. 216-218). Fifteen years later, Stephen (2007) revisited Teotitlán del Valle and found an incorporation of women into civil and religious offices due, in part, to the hundreds of men who have migrated (p. 44). The same observation is confirmed by Velásquez Cepeda (2004, p. 487), who points out that “the diminished male population in some villages with high out-migration [...] has opened the door for women to substitute for men in these posts or services [*cargo* services]”.

More recently Perry *et al.* (2009), in their study of the Mixtec community of San Miguel Tlacotepec, detected that “women who formerly held civil *cargos* [...] have entered the political arena as family representatives and have recently become eligible to serve in municipal cargos” (p. 221). Perry *et al.* found that 61.6 per cent of the total voters were women but that their participation in decision making processes was still quite limited (p. 233). Perry *et al.* (2009) conclude by raising questions about the role that indigenous women may play in shaping the socio-political landscape in sending and receiving communities, and call for further investigation into this topic.

Thus, previous research has documented that the out-migration - and consequent shortage - of male indigenous citizens has triggered greater participation of indigenous women in customary law duties, roles from which females were previously largely excluded²⁹. This complex panorama is at the core of this thesis and requires a framework of analysis that observes migration not only as a one-directional process but explores the transformative effects that migration involves.

²⁹ Many indigenous Oaxacan communities ruled under customary law have granted women the right to vote and to hold a cargo (318 out of 418 approximately) (Martinez 2008 cited in Perry *et al.* 2009).

2.5 Engendering Transnationalism

From the early 1990s to the present day, the study of transnational migration has expanded its territory from anthropology and sociology into geography, political science and international development studies, where it has led to new conceptualisations of mobility's transformative effects on the relationship between the social and spatial characteristics of those involved (Sørensen and Guarnizo, 2007). The term "transnationalism" has been criticised by several scholars, arguing that it misrepresents migration historically and in its contemporary context (Mahler 2003, Dannecker, 2005). Moreover, transnationalism has also been interpreted as synonymous with global (see Hirst and Thompson, 1996). However, Kearney (1995) and Smith (1999) offer a clear distinction of both terms, which illustrates the usefulness of the concept. They distinguish globalisation from transnationalism by highlighting that transnational processes are anchored in, but also transcend one or several nation states. This implies that national territories and identities continue to be important and are not entirely superseded as they play a key role in shaping transnational migration patterns (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998). This argument is reinforced by looking at the ways in which the US Government controls the documented and undocumented migration of "unwanted" migrants as well as the policies that the Mexican government introduced to generate better standards of living in those places identified as producing migrant exoduses. Thus, in order to clarify what is meant by transnationalism with respect to migration, Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc (1994) define it as the "processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (p. 6). Furthermore, Guarnizo (1997) argues that:

At the group level, transnationalism is understood as a series of economic, sociocultural, and political practical and discursive relations that transcend

the territorially bound jurisdiction of the nation-state. At the individual level, transnational practices and discourses are those which are a habitual part of the normal lives of those involved. Transnational relations are considered to be part of the normal life of an individual when their absence will impede or drastically disrupt her/his habitual pattern of activities, whether social, economic, cultural, or political (p. 9).

In this way and according to Mahler (2003), transnationalism should be focused on “the *social processes* in which migrants establish social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders” (p. 289, emphasis added).

A transnational migration approach also encourages migration scholarship to look at the production of ‘dual’ ‘triple’ or ‘multi’ lifestyles and their social transformation across borders (Sandu 2005, Schuerkens 2005); to scrutinize the dynamic process of networking among migrants; and more specifically to adopt a wider perspective on the formation of transnational entities - i.e. transnational families and transnational associations - that can contribute to a deeper understanding of the relations between places, culture and gender (Gallo 2008).

Ever more frequently, indigenous communities have been deterritorialised and re-territorialised (Kearney and Besserer 2004), not only because their members have migrated to urban centres, but also because they have built multiple networks - or in Escobar’s (2003) terms ‘meshworks’ - of their communities in other national and international territories (Velasco Ortiz 2005, Yescas Angeles 2008). These multiple networks create links between their members (the migrants) and the originating communities, so that migrants can remain integrated in their communities of origin while they concurrently try to integrate into their destination communities.

The links created between indigenous Mexican migrants and communities of origin have been documented by research (see Kearney and Besserer 2004, Velasco Ortiz 2005) which argues that most indigenous migrants retain ties through monetary

contributions for development projects and saint celebrations, and through meetings in hometown associations; and some travel back and forth quite frequently (see Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004a, Hulshof 1991). This kind of migration is recognised as transnational (Sandu 2005).

The transnational migration approach that this thesis proposes to scrutinize indigenous Mexican migration and its impacts is one that incorporates the *third stage* of feminist scholarship in migration and examines transnational migration networks as gendered institutions (see Pessar and Malher 2001). Together with class, ethnicity, and marital status, gender norms and subjectivities set various constraints for migration actors. While the specifics of gendered migration may vary throughout the world and through different regions in Mexico, a transnational migration framework that prioritizes gender can be expanded to the case of the indigenous communities in Mexico. Research that aims to examine interactions between men and women, gender relations, can enrich our understanding of the life experiences between male and female migrants and those who do not physically migrate (mainly women). Indeed, migration research without a fully integrated study of the intimate working of gender provides only a partial view of transnational movements (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003).

2.5.1 Gender relations

In terms of gender relations, this thesis uses Bina Agarwal's "bargaining framework" (1994) of analysis. Agarwal developed this framework in a study of women's access to land in five countries of south Asia and argued, from a feminist economics perspective, that the most important economic factor affecting women's situation is the gender gap in command over property. Within this framework,

Agarwal highlights that access to resources (i.e. property) can be crucial for enhancing women's position and well being within and outside the household.

Agarwal (1994) defines the term gender relations as the “relations of power between women and men which are revealed in a range of practices, ideas and representations [...] between men and women and the ascribing to them of different abilities, attitudes, desires, personality traits, behavioural patterns and so on” (p. 51). Moreover, she recognises that gender relations are further interrelated with other structures of social hierarchy (e.g. class, race and ethnicity), which at the same time influence and structure relations between people from the same sex (for instance hierarchies of masculinity among men).

Agarwal argues that gender relations are characterized by elements of cooperation and conflict, and that their hierarchical character is kept, changed or questioned through a process of contestation or bargain among actors - men, women and social and governmental institutions - (p. 52, 72). Two parties cooperate as long as any given “process” leaves them better off than non-cooperation. But conflict emerges between actors when power arrangements leave one of the parties in a stronger position than the other. If this happens, then we talk of unequal bargaining position/power (p. 59). What determines individuals' bargaining power is the so-called “fall-back position”³⁰ of the actors and the degree to which his/her claims are legitimized³¹ socially and legally (p. 54); some actors have more to lose (socially, politically, economically, etc.) than others outside the cooperation arrangement.

³⁰ The fall-back position is understood as the outside options which determine how well off he/she would be if cooperation ceased (Agarwal 1994 p. 72).

³¹ Legitimacy of the claim in Agarwal's framework refers to situations that are accepted and enforced by the community of which a member is part. To legitimize a claim would require not only a change in ideas but their enforcement via the State and a system of social sanctions.

Although the “bargaining approach” has been used mainly in the field of economics (Agarwal 1997) and at the household level, Bina Agarwal’s (1994) gender relations approach offers to go further by arguing that changes and transformation in gender relations within the home are clearly linked to institutions outside it (p. 71). As a result, she proposes to also look at gender interactions in public arenas - the market, the community and the State - and to establish levels of interlinked bargaining, which she argues, are mutually dependent (p. 52).

Hence, the household (private arena), the market, the community and the State (public arena) are defined in Agarwal’s framework as interacting arenas where gender relations, through conflict or cooperation, are challenged, re-constructed or maintained. These public and private arenas might, at specific junctures and in different historical and social contexts, either converge (reinforce each other) or move in contradictory directions, providing spaces of countervailing resistances (p. 80).

In this light, this thesis seeks to understand how an external pressure - migration³² - impacts on gender structures and relations in indigenous communities, as well as how gender relations re-structure migration. Moreover, because gender relations also have “internal” processes (Connell 2009), this work also observes the public and private arenas of the indigenous communities to understand the impacts of migration on the current gender structure.

2.5.2 Masculinities and Femininities

A study of the impacts of transnational migration would be incomplete without analysing the influence that the phenomenon has on gender identities: masculinities

³² This thesis also recognises that “external” events such as migration are gendered from the start.

and femininities (Amuchástegui and Szasz 2007, Connell 2009). Gender identity refers to the degree to which individuals see themselves as masculine and feminine, given what it means to be a man or a woman in a particular society (Stets and Burke 2000). Masculinity is not a synonym for ‘man’, nor femininity for ‘woman’, but both gender identities are social processes in which structures, culture and subjectivity are involved (Amuchástegui and Szasz 2007). It might be easy to believe that masculinity and femininity are innate, residing in the particular biology of the human male/female or in the simple fact of having a penis or a vagina (Ayala Carrillo 2007)³³. However, the terms masculinity(ies) and femininity(ies) incorporate a set of alterative meanings that are constructed through the relationships men and women establish with themselves and with their surroundings (Connell 2002; Kimmel 1997; Stets and Burke 2000). Thus, the study of masculinities/femininities is about how male and female bodies embody gender practices in a specific social context (Amuchástegui and Szasz 2007) and the meanings implied by those practices.

There is no generally accepted kind of man/woman or a “man’s/woman’s point of view” but a set of social practices that emanate from a dominant discourse of being a man or a woman, the symbolic domain of the social ideal of manhood/womanhood or being a man/woman (Núñez Noriega 2007). This dominant discourse is what Connell calls hegemonic masculinity (2002) and emphasized femininity (1987) respectively. Connell states that some masculinities are dominant while others are subordinated and marginalized, but she argues that no femininity is hegemonic. Connell (1987, 2002) makes this distinction because, according to her, all forms of femininity are constructed in the context of the subordination of women to men.

³³ Marianne van den Wijngaard (1997), among others, argues that “sex” (male and female) is also constructed.

Many males have come to know what it means to be a man by placing their conceptions in opposition to others who are racially and sexually different, while overall in opposition to the feminine world (Kimmel 1997). In this light, the idea of masculinity is constructed by making distinctions and comparisons among masculinities and femininities. But although masculinity as a social construction implies exercising power, that does not mean that every individual man, just for the fact of being male, is powerful or holds power (Amuchástegui and Szasz 2007, p. 17). Men exercise power over other men³⁴. This means that there are men who have more power than others (e.g. economic, cultural and social power). Men obtain or lose symbolic power³⁵ depending on their race, ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic level, religion, among others.

In terms of femininity, it is even before puberty that girls start negotiating the forces of adult femininity, a set of structures and meanings that more fully inscribe their subordination to men's desires and interest on the basis of gender (Kelly *et al.* 2005, Kimmel *et al.* 2008). Women are pressured to make themselves "attractive", to define themselves and other women in terms of their positions in the heterosexual market (see also McRobbie 2008). Connell (1997) argues that all forms of femininity(ies) are constructed in the context of the subordination of women by men, however, some kinds of femininity(ies) have greater symbolic power than others³⁶.

³⁴ And women who hold a key to the dominant narrative of masculinity can also exercise power over men.

³⁵ Symbolic power is defined as "the invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it" (Bourdieu 1991, p.164)

³⁶ For instance the white, thin, tall and fashionable woman has been depicted by the media as the worldwide female prototype.

Although masculinities and femininities vary from one country to another and from one city, village and family to the next (Ayala Carrillo 2007), it can be said that in the western world, hegemonic masculinity is represented by a white, heterosexual, economically stable, successful, married man (Goffman 1963 cited Kimmel 1997, p. 3). Meanwhile the desirable femininity is depicted by a woman who is physically attractive, fashionable, passive, cooperative, expressive and educated but willing to become a housewife (Stets and Burke 2000). Representations of this ideal man and woman are broadcast, imported and imitated around the world, leaving other ways of being a man/woman less valuable.

Mexican, and generally Latin American, masculinity is characterised - by local dominant discourses - by independence, power and control over women in the family (Alcalde 2011, p. 459). On the other hand, the Mexican woman has been traditionally represented by the sweet, passive, submissive and discrete housewife dominated by the *macho* man (Arrom 1998, Chant with Craske 2003, Gutmann 1996, Ramirez 2011). However, in a developing country like Mexico, the “traditional” images of the *macho* man and submissive women have undergone several transformations. Chant and Craske (2003) and Espinosa Damián (2012) claim that in the last three decades “traditional” gender roles in the country have been re-accommodated due to the increase in the levels of basic and secondary education among women, accompanied by a decrease of fertility levels per woman. As Mexican society has constructed its own understanding and classification of how a Mexican man and woman should be, indigenous people are left at the bottom of the stratification ladder³⁷ (Wade 2005). Nevertheless, in terms of masculinity, while

³⁷ Indigenous and queer (gay, transgender, transsexuals, etc.) people are at the bottom of the Mexican society stratification (Consejo Nacional para Prevenir la Discriminación 2010).

indigenous masculinity may be one of the most subordinated forms on the national stage, within indigenous communities a hegemonic form is still likely.

By incorporating the analysis of indigenous masculinities and femininities, this thesis aims to offer a new insight into the intersection between gender, migration and ethnicity by bringing to the fore the impacts that indigenous transnational migration has had on the understanding, re-construction and expression of masculinity(ies) and femininity(ies) in the migrants' communities of origin. Most indigenous male migrants come from rural communities where a rigid construction of masculinity has been founded on hard agricultural labour, community cooperation, domination over female relatives, prestige and age-wisdom (de Keijzer and Rodríguez 2007; Ramirez 2011). For many years this kind of masculinity was seen as the dominant masculinity. However due to, in part, transnational migration, working in the fields as peasants is no longer the only alternative in the construction of indigenous Mexican masculinity, and participation in the migratory process is one of the actions that has given men alternative social validation (Rosas 2007). Male Mexican immigrants might arrive in their communities of destination with an adherence to a specific kind of masculinity (e.g. *macho*) but while moving through different social contexts or gender regimes, the previous conception of masculinity is likely to mutate (Ramirez 2011).

On the other hand indigenous women, although they also migrate, are still the main receptors of the tangible and symbolic impacts (e.g. monetary remittances and ideas) of transnational migration. This, along with the internal changes that indigenous communities and the country in general has witnessed (e.g. industrialisation, greater education and health services among others), have given indigenous women other alternatives to perform and understand their femininity(ies) (Chant 2003 pp. 2-5).

Indigenous groups are not a homogeneous population; every tribe or community has its own particular characteristics, customs and rules (Hernández-Díaz 2007a). Although in Mexico indigenous people are recognised through a particular cultural unit (Hernández-Díaz 2007b, p. 7), this work does not try to generalise indigenous Mexican masculinity(ies) and femininity (ies), and recognises that these are neither uniform across societies nor historically static (Agarwal 1994). For that reason, this thesis bases its analysis on specific masculinities and femininities performed in Santiago Cacaloxtotec and San Bartolomé Quialana.

2.6 Empowerment and Transnational migration

Some studies (González Montes 2005, Hernández-Díaz and Carreño 2007, Stephen 2007, Perry *et al.* 2009, Velásquez Cepeda 2004) have implied the greater involvement of indigenous Mexican women in the political and civil life of their communities due to the migration of their male relatives, and some of them have taken this increased female participation as a sign of women's empowerment. However greater participation is not equal to empowerment (Sen and Batliwala 2000, p. 21). Communities and social phenomenon, in this case migration, might create an environment that is conducive to empowerment or not.

Only a few studies (Carton 2002, de Haas and van Rooij 2010, Hugo 2000, Sinha *et al.* 2012, Zentgraf 2002) have specifically researched the link between migration and empowerment. Within the Mexican-US migration field, an important number of studies have explored the transformations experienced by migrants in their communities of arrival (Barabas 2008; Cohen *et al.* 2009; Cornelius *et al.* 2009; Kearney 2000). Another group of studies has also engaged with the transformation of migrants' communities of origin and the 'left-behind' through the analysis of monetary and social remittances (Cota-Cabrera *et al.* 2009, Hulshof 1991, Juan

Martínez 2013, Velásquez Cepeda 2004). However studies that explore the link between migration and empowerment (for migrants and non-migrants) are still in their early stages.

2.6.1 Theorising empowerment

Despite having become a widely used term, not everyone agrees that empowerment can be clearly defined or measured. The concept of empowerment has been developed mainly in relation to poverty, gender equality and women's status within a society (Mosedale 2003). Some authors have defined empowerment in relation to reproductive and sexual health (Sen and Batliwala 2000) and others from an economic perspective (England 2000). Most authors who have scrutinized the term have based their empirical evidence on women from the Global South (Kishor 2000 and Jejeebhoy 2000 cited in Presser and Sen 2000) and few of them have done it in the Global North (England 2000). Hence, although from different perspectives and locations, most social scientists agree that empowerment is a process of change in power relations in favour of those at lower levels in the hierarchy³⁸.

Sarah Mosedale (2003) states that, although empowerment means different things to different people, there are four aspects which seem to be generally accepted in the social science literature. Firstly, to be empowered one must have been disempowered. Secondly, empowerment cannot be bestowed by a third party. Thirdly, definitions of empowerment include a sense of people making decisions on matters which are important in their lives and particular situations. Finally, empowerment is an ongoing process rather than a measurable product. It is a relational entity. One does not become empowered or not in some absolute sense.

³⁸ The term has also been used by governmental, non-governmental and international organisations. For instance, United Nations have recognised the importance of it by incorporating the term as a fundamental aspect of one of its Millennium Development Goals and the creation of the Gender Empowerment Measurement (GEM).

People might be empowered relative to others or relative to themselves at specific period of their lives.

Eyben *et al.* (2008) argue that it is possible to conceptualise empowerment in three different ways: social, economic and political. Social empowerment refers to one's own place within a society, which should be recognised and respected on the terms which the person him/herself wants to live and not on terms dictated by others (p. 8). Economic empowerment is the capacity of men and women to take part in, contribute to and benefit from processes which make it possible for them to negotiate a fairer distribution of resources. Economic empowerment should enable people to think beyond immediate survival needs and allow them to recognize and exercise agency and choice (p. 9). Political empowerment is the increased participation and representation in political institutions of those who are the least vocal. Political empowerment grants the ability to speak out, to speak for themselves and the right to engage in political - democratic- processes (Ibid p. 18).

Having analysed a number of studies on women's empowerment, this thesis makes use of Naila Kabeer's (1999, 2001) framework of empowerment, which allows us to analyse how a specific social process might be a catalyser of change for the lives of disempowered people. In this specific case I take transnational migration as the social phenomenon which scholars have assumed to be a catalyst of change for the lives of migrants and those who stay behind (see Akram and Karim 2005, Aysa 2004, Brown 1983, Hughes 2001, Palriwala 2008, Velásquez Cepeda 2004). I use Kabeer's framework of analysis not only to complement the analysis of changes in gender relations (under Agarwal's framework) but to enable me to leave open to question whether progressive changes in gender relations lead to women's

empowerment. In the following section I explore in more detail Kabeer's framework of empowerment in order to explain its suitability.

- **Kabeer's framework of empowerment**

Naila Kabeer's (1999, 2001) understanding of empowerment is bound up with the concept of "power",³⁹ which she defines as "the ability to make choices" (p. 18); and establishes an indivisible boundary between disempowerment-empowerment. For Kabeer empowerment is a process of change "by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability" (p. 19).

To disentangle her understanding of empowerment, Kabeer takes us to the analysis of the concept of choice. For her "choice" implies the possibility of alternatives (Kabeer 1999) but she also claims that not all "choices" are equally relevant to the definition of power. According to the significance and consequence that different kind of choices might have in people's lives, Kabeer differentiates "choice" according to first and second order. First order choices are what she calls "strategic life choices" which are relevant for people to live the lives they wish (i.e. choice of livelihood, whether to marry, freedom of movement, number of children). Second order choices, less consequential, are defined as relevant for the quality of someone's life but without defining it. Thus, besides from being a process of change, empowerment "refers to the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them" (Kabeer 2001, p. 19).

³⁹ See Mosedale for more discussion over "power" in theoretical models of empowerment.

Because the ability to make choices has expanded and changed, Kabeer establishes three inter-related and interdependent dimensions that try to explain how this process of change might take place: resources, agency and achievements.

Resources are the circumstances under which choices take place. For Kabeer, resources do not only imply material resources; social (human relations and networks) and human (skills) resources are also equally important (Ibid, p. 20). Moreover, resources should not only be analysed in terms of greater current “access” to them but also according to future claims to social, human and material resources (Kabeer 1999). Agency is for Kabeer more than taking action; she argues that agency involves “power within”, which are the meanings, motivations and purposes that individuals bring to a specific activity (Kabeer 2001, p. 21). Hence, agency integrates an extensive range of purposive actions (i.e. bargaining, negotiation, deception, manipulation) and intangible and cognitive process such as reflection and analysis. Achievements are the outcomes of the ability to exercise choice. If individuals do not achieve valued ways of “being and doing” (Sen 1985 cited in Kabeer 2001, p. 21) then this might be a reflection of the inequalities in the distribution of capabilities, which at the same time are a manifestation of disempowerment.

Therefore, the ability to make choices as a process of change can be assessed in terms of their transformative capacity, the extent to which the choices made have the potential for questioning and destabilising existing social inequalities and the degree to which choices merely express fundamental inequalities of society (p. 26). But how do we establish if someone or a group of people has moved from disempowerment to empowerment? Although Kabeer discusses the difficulty of measuring an abstract concept such as empowerment, she argues that these three

interrelated dimensions of the process of change - resources, agency and outcomes – can be measured or analysed in order to detect a movement towards empowerment.

To detect how changes in women's and men's resources will be translated into the ability to make choices, one should first pay attention to the conditions in which people are making choices. Kabeer strongly criticizes studies of empowerment that determine empowerment based only on access to material resources. For Kabeer "resources" have to express the potential for greater human agency. Thus, in order to understand how "resources" translate into a greater ability to choose one should distinguish between *de jure* and *de facto* entitlement to resources. Naila Kabeer proposes the concept of "control" to observe such a distinction. Control refers "to having a say in relation to the resource in question" (p. 31). In this way, the concept of control will help us to recognise that "access to resources" will only translate into empowerment if women or men are able to act on the resources in a definitive and self-chosen way. Moreover, if resources are enhanced but do not challenge the existing structures of inequalities and discrimination in a given society, they may help to improve people's economic welfare but might not necessarily empower them (see Agarwal 1994).

To measure agency in terms of women's empowerment Kabeer focuses on so-called "decision-making agency". Furthermore, she is very critical of studies where agency has been measured from statistical approaches by asking women about their attitude/role towards specific decisions, because, according to Kabeer, those kinds of questions and answers might not have the same consequential significance in women's lives. Accordingly, empowerment should also involve more than participation in the decision-making process because "it must also include the

processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able to and entitled to make decisions” (Csaszar 2005 cited in Eyben *et al.* 2008 p. 5).

Achievements or outcomes also have to be measured for their transformatory implications in relation to social inequalities. Kabeer (2001) encourages researchers to make a clear distinction between gender-differentiated achievements that are the result of preferences and those that are the result of inequalities in the ability to make choices.

For Kabeer, the three interrelated dimensions of the process of change - choice, agency and achievements - feedback to each other and are indivisible in determining the meaning of an indicator of empowerment.

Furthermore, Kabeer reflects on the ways “cultural context” influences the measurement of resources, agency and achievements (p. 45). Cultural context is defined as “deeply-entrenched rules, norms and practices which shape social relations in different geographical locations and which help to influence behaviour, define values and shape choice” (p. 46). For instance, in some communities women obtain greater respect if they have closely followed the community’s norms and tradition; thus women’s behaviour will probably reflect that wished for by the community. In this sense, Kabeer argues that agency can be largely shaped by social context instead of women’s individual characteristics (p. 47)⁴⁰.

In this case, according to Kabeer (2001), power relations might be expressed not only through the exercise of agency but also through consent and complicity, and through coercion and conflict (p. 24). She explains this kind of power by drawing on Sen (1990 cited in Kabeer 1999b) and Bourdieu’s (1977 [1972] cited in Kabeer

⁴⁰ An example of this would be the communities where Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is part of a ritual that enhances women’s honour and prestige.

2001) concept of “doxa”. Bourdieu and Sen argue that “the underdog” comes *to take for granted* the legitimacy of his/her inequality and becomes an implicit accomplice without even questioning whether or not his/her alternatives - to overcome inequalities - are materially possible.

Under these kinds of circumstances, Kabeer recognises that her equation of empowerment through choice and power might be under conflict; notwithstanding she recalls the so-called critical consciousness or reflexivity which states that men and women are always able to at least imagine the possibility of having chosen differently.

The inevitable importance of social context, or what Kabeer (2001) also calls “the structures of constraint” (p. 48), remind us that while individual women and men can challenge specific rules or customs - constraints - within their communities, inequalities are difficult to overcome by individuals alone. It is true that individuals can fight against social norms but the consequences might be worse and furthermore their impact on the situation of women and men remains limited. Individual empowerment is a weak gain if this is not then transformed into collective empowerment. Thus Kabeer claims that “the project of women’s (and men) empowerment is dependent on collective action in the public arena as well as individual assertiveness in the private” (p. 47).

Last, but not least, Kabeer tells us that the process of empowerment can reflect transformation at three different levels: immediate, intermediate and deep (p. 26). Empowerment at immediate levels is what we can recognise as a sense of self-confidence and self-esteem, to be aware that one has the capacity to act. At an intermediate level empowerment is reflected in the questioning and destabilization

of rules and relationships that prevail within institutions (family, government, economic, cultural and religious organisations). Finally, empowerment at deeper levels is when hidden structures of power (class, gender, race, etc) and resources are challenged in a specific society.

The suitability of Kabeer's framework for this thesis lies in the definition she establishes for empowerment. For Kabeer, besides being a process of change, empowerment is an expansion of 'abilities' and 'choices' that were previously denied; and such an expansion is triggered by a social phenomenon – or phenomena - in a given period of time. For the specific case of this thesis, indigenous women were previously denied *de facto* participation in their communities. But nowadays, it seems that migration, a social phenomenon, might have the possibility to expand their resources. In this light, Kabeer's framework would be useful to understand the conditions under which indigenous women are making decisions - or perhaps deciding not to make them - and whether these newly acquired opportunities offer consequential significance in their ways of being and doing. Kabeer's framework of empowerment also facilitates the opportunity to explore if transnational migration is the only force triggering a process of empowerment, and whether women of all ages and social circumstances are experiencing it.

According to Hugo (2000), migration can be seen as a cause or/and a consequence of empowerment (p. 119). But if we want to examine if a process of empowerment is taking place, it is extremely important to highlight the social context and pre-migration experiences. In this thesis I prefer to follow Rodenburg (1993 cited in Hugo 2000, p. 307) and avoid making the prevalent assumption that male migration leads to women's empowerment. Without carefully looking not only to the social context and pre-migration experiences, but also to the different and diverse "kinds"

of women that might exist within the same community and are immersed in the migration phenomenon, we cannot know.

2.7 Research Questions

Given the above theoretical framework and literature review, the overarching research questions and sub questions that will guide this work are as follows:

1. *How is transnational migration of indigenous Mexicans (Mixtecs and Zapotecs) to the US and urban areas of Mexico gendered?*

- What vintages of migration can be identified in Santiago Cacaloxtotec and San Bartolomé Quialana?
- Where do Cacaleño and Quialanense⁴¹ migrate to?
- Why do Cacaleño and Quialanense migrate?
- How do Cacaleño and Quialanense migrate? When?
- How often do Cacaleño and Quialanense migrate; and how often do they come back?
- Who migrates and who does not, and what does gender have to do with this?
- What links are maintained with migrants' communities?
- How do indigenous migrants articulate with their diasporas, and how does this impact their communities of origin?

2. *How is transnational migration of indigenous Mexicans (Mixtecs and Zapotecs) to the US and urban areas of Mexico re-constructing gender relations of both indigenous communities in Mexico and the diaspora (in the US and in urban Mexico)?*

- To what extent are indigenous women who stay behind taking on new roles?
- Which women are taking new roles; and what kind of roles are they?
- What roles are indigenous women playing in shaping the socio-political landscape of both indigenous communities and the diaspora?
- Are gender relations and traditions in indigenous communities being re-constructed? Why and how?
- Have indigenous masculinities and femininities transformed due to migration; and how?

⁴¹ During the entire thesis "Cacaleño(s)" will refer to men and women from Santiago Cacaloxtotec; and "Quialanense(s)" to men and women from San Bartolomé Quialana.

3. *Is transnational migration empowering...?*

- For migrants?
- For indigenous women who stay behind?
- For the community or origin and the diaspora?
- Is transnational migration the only social phenomenon triggering empowerment?

2.8 Conclusion

Drawing on the preceding literature review, this research challenges the long held assumption that Mexican migrants to the US belong to an homogeneous ethnic group: *mestizos*. Only a limited number of Mexican migration studies have taken gender as a central aspect and even fewer have researched indigenous migration from a gender perspective and considered its link with empowerment; this is the gap that this research contributes to.

Absence of male relatives has been taken by some studies as a key factor changing gender relations in favour of women and constituting their empowerment; however, this thesis questions these assumptions and advocates for a more careful look at the social context where migration takes place. While there is no doubt that migration is transforming and/or restructuring economic, cultural, social and political life in indigenous communities, tracing these shifts requires careful use of concepts and an innovative multi-site ethnography that can capture particular transnational spaces. The methods of research and analysis are examined in detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 3. Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes how this thesis went about answering the research questions proposed and justifies the methods chosen in researching transnational migration from a gender perspective. The chapter is divided into five sections; the first section narrates the two main research strategies in the field of the social sciences, quantitative and qualitative, explores their differences and similarities and justifies the adoption of a qualitative approach. This section also presents the multi-sited ethnographic approach used to study transnational migrants and their communities of origin. The second section highlights the rationale for adopting participant observation and in-depth interviews as the main methods in data generation. It also describes how, when and where the fieldwork and interviews took place, how many people were interviewed and my experiences during the fieldwork. The third section explores issues related to ethical considerations and the fourth section discusses the methods utilised in the analysis of the data generated, emphasizing that this study has used a gendered transnational migration lens. Finally, section five scrutinizes how specific identities of the researcher, such as gender and ethnicity, can open or close doors during fieldwork.

3.2 A qualitative research

Within the social sciences “how to conduct research” has been a long standing debate and the comparison, antagonism and crossroads between qualitative and quantitative research strategies have been addressed by an important number of social scientists (Bryman 2008, p. 21). Although the distinction between both strategies is ambiguous, the fundamental difference between them lies in the aspects

they emphasize: while quantitative research emphasizes quantification (numbers), qualitative research emphasizes words.

Quantitative research examines data in numerical forms, generally using tools from the field of statistics. Quantitative research requires for the elements of the research problem to be represented in a numerical model (i.e. linear or exponential) and provides a fundamental connection between empirical observation and numerical expression. Moreover, quantitative research embodies a view of social reality as external or objective (Bryman 2008). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research seeks to explain and investigates why and how individuals interpret their social world in a specific way. Thus, quantitative research is seen as deductive, with a positivist epistemological orientation and ontologically objective, with the qualitative strategy being defined as inductive, epistemologically interpretivist and ontologically constructionist (May 2001).

Having highlighted the fundamental differences, the consequential question would be: how do social scientists choose a research strategy? Henslin (2010) argues that social scientists choose their research methods based on questions to be answered, their access to potential subjects, the resources available, their training, and ethical considerations. Furthermore he states that each method is better for answering certain types of questions (p. 138). Following this, choosing a research method depends in part on the specific research problem.

Some authors (Bryman 2006a, Bryman 2006b, Tashakkori and Teddie 2003) argue that the constructed antagonism between methods is blurry because “studies that have the broad characteristics of one research strategy may have a characteristic of the other” (Bryman 2008, p. 23). This ambiguity in research strategies has been

called mixed methods and the term refers to a research strategy that combines quantitative and qualitative methods (Morgan 1999). Mixed methods would be seen as an ideal solution to narrow the dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative research, and also as a tool to a greater understanding of a research problem. However, at the same time, others like Smith and Heshusius (1986 cited in Bryman 2008) claim that mixed methods carry important epistemological and ontological commitments which question the legitimacy of such a strategy.

The purpose of this research is to explore the role of transnational migration - of Cacaleño and Quialanense - in the transformation of gender relations and identities, and to identify possible processes of empowerment in the indigenous communities of origin and in the diasporas established in the communities of destination. Hence, I argue that a qualitative methodology is the most suitable to explore and disentangle this specific research problem. The thesis explores concepts such as reconstruction of gender relations, empowerment, femininities and masculinities, which are difficult to quantify⁴² but which are important to understand through the contextualisation of the respondents'⁴³ experiences within theoretical frameworks. The thesis is based on a comparative case study between two indigenous communities (Santiago Cacaloxtepec and San Bartolomé Quialana), but the case study does not claim to be representative of the indigenous Zapotec and Mixtec population. On the contrary, the case study only explores specific concepts at specific social realities. Finally, although the thesis is based on a multi-sited ethnography and in-depth interviews, it integrates basic statistical information from

⁴² Although I argue that empowerment and gender relations are not directly measurable, some institutions have made these concepts measurable, e.g. the United Nations' Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM).

⁴³ This work also includes photographs to give the reader an idea of the research setting; however the study does not involve visual ethnography of the photographs.

the data produced during fieldwork and from secondary sources regarding Mexican indigenous migration to the US.

3.2.1 Multi-sited ethnography in an era of transnational migration: the case of indigenous Mexican transmigrants

This thesis involved ethnographic fieldwork, which lasted around twelve months. The term ‘ethnographic fieldwork’ refers to the method of research in which the researcher is immersed in a social setting for a period of time in order to observe, listen, interview, and develop an understanding of the social relationships, beliefs, and values of a community (Angrosino 2007, Bryman 2008).

Nevertheless, as Fitzgerald (2004) argues, how can one go about doing an ethnography of transnational migrants without misrepresenting them when starting and ending in one locality? Transnational movements call for a kind of ethnography that recognizes the importance of placing research at different ends of migrants’ trajectories (Gallo 2009). In light of this, and since indigenous Mexican migration has been defined by several scholars as transnational (Cota-Cabrera *et al.* 2009, Fitzgerald 2004, Sandu 2005), this research adopts a ‘multi-sited ethnography’ to better represent the migration experiences of Mixtec Cacaleño and Zapotec Quialanese migrants and those who do not physically migrate but stay in the communities of origin.

In terms of methods, multi-sited ethnography aims to “follow people, connections, associations, and relationships across space (because they are substantially continuous and spatially non-contiguous)” (Falzon 2009a, p. 2). In other words, multi-sited ethnography looks at the event from different locations and has the capacity to make connections or note distinctive discourses from site to site (Pasura 2008, p. 68).

The term “multi-sited ethnography” was coined in 1995 by George E. Marcus. At that time the novel approach was strongly criticised by conventional ethnographers who argued that ethnography required staying in the site of choice for a relatively long period of time in order to understand the social relations of the subjects studied (Falzon 2009a). One of the main arguments against multi-sited ethnography is still the lack of so-called “depthness” or “thickness” because, according to Geertz (1973 cited in Falzon 2009a), the crucial factor that enables the researcher to achieve a depth of understanding is time.

A second wave of multi-sited ethnographers (see the edited work of Falzon 2009b) have come to reformulate the validity of the concept by arguing, among other aspects, that space or place is not only physically visible but produced by different actors in dispersed physical locations. Moreover, multi-sited ethnography means that as a researcher one works in different places which are not only geographically dispersed but also socially and culturally different. In fact, Gallo (2009) and Falzon (2009a) argue that in multi-sited ethnography it is not only important how many and how distant the sites of research are but that they are different “because without it there would be absolutely no point in moving around” (Falzon 2009a, p. 13).

In this study indigenous Mexican migrants move transnationally not only from one location to another but between spaces which are culturally and socially different. Cacaleño and Quialanense move from their communities of origin to places where social, economic and cultural practices are different (i.e. US). Indigenous (undocumented) migrants also move following job opportunities or simply trying to disguise themselves from the US immigration authorities. Thus, they are constantly on the move and wherever they go, they construct and re-configure places and practices which at the same time impact their communities or origin. In this light,

and following Gallo (2009), this study has chosen a multi-sited ethnography approach in order to “follow” migrants and do justice to their transnationalism.

3.2.2 Problems and challenges

Bryman (2008, p. 421) states that “knowing when to stop is not an easy or straightforward matter in ethnography” and this is especially true when ethnographic work implies moving around different locations. As Clifford (1997, p. 57) asks “how many sites can be studied extensively before the ‘criteria’ of depth is compromised?” When a researcher decides to venture into multi-sited ethnography there is always a risk of not getting “deep” enough into the fieldwork and as a consequence overlooking important matters. Bryman (2008, p. 421) argues that ethnography never ends and that it is easy for the researcher to lack a sense of an obvious endpoint and that external factors are those which mark the end. In my case, during the almost year-long fieldwork I had to travel, learn, observe, participate, take notes and interview faster than I was accustomed to. The timeframe of three years that the Ph.D. requires was the external factor that necessitated my withdrawal from the field.

Furthermore, multi-sited ethnography of transnational migrants entails innumerable places which could potentially be included in the research project - the different places where migrants go -, such that deciding which or how many of them should be included might be arbitrary (Pasura 2008). In fact the research design along with the research questions and objectives help the researcher to “choose” the most adequate sites in a project (Falzon 2009a). This study could have chosen different research sites in the US where Cacaleño and Quialanense migrate (i.e. New York and Florida), however the sites chosen were cautiously picked based on research variables such as most popular destination.

In addition to this, multi-sited ethnography is likely to involve high financial, physical and emotional costs. From my own personal experience I travelled between two different communities in Oaxaca, two different countries (Mexico and the US) and three Californian cities. The nature of the research and subjects of study required me to be as mobile as they are in order to understand their experiences (see Fitzgerald 2004).

3.3 Methods of generating data and gaining access

3.3.1 Fieldwork, participant observation and interviews

This thesis involves the use of participant observation and in-depth interviews as the main methods for data generation. From August 2010 to September 2011, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in the Zapotec town of San Bartolomé Quialana, in the Mixtec town of Santiago Cacaloxtotec and in the Californian cities of Anaheim, Greater Los Angeles, Madera and Stockton in the US. During this period I spent a little more than three months living in each indigenous community and three months in the US (see Appendix 1). I chose to carry out my fieldwork in these two communities after an analysis of different Oaxacan indigenous communities. Having in mind the research questions, I worked with José Juan Martínez, a member of staff of *Oportunidades* and an “expert” on Oaxaca communities, to select the communities for this project. José Juan provided me with a list of communities based on my requirements. I was looking for one community governed under customary law and one governed through political parties, both with substantial levels of male emigration. Moreover I was looking for communities located in different parts of Oaxaca and with an important number of indigenous-language speakers. Finally, due to time constraints, I knew I had to base my analysis on communities that were relatively small (no more than 2,000 inhabitants).

Having decided on Quialana and Cacaloxtepec, I carried out two weeks of pre- in each to ensure their suitability. During the two weeks I carried out a partial household survey (see Appendix 3) which, while perhaps an unusual method in ethnographic research, served to introduce me to the communities, provided some quantitative data on the extent and types of migration and gave me a baseline from which to work (see UN 2005, UN 2008, Sarantakos 1998). I surveyed 25 households in each community using a short closed questionnaire that I completed and did not take more than thirty minutes.

- **The pre-fieldwork**

Through José Juan Martínez I established first-entry contacts in the communities; both of my contacts were community social workers who were in charge of several towns in their respective areas. In Cacaloxtepec I introduced myself to the doctor and nurse who kindly took me to meet the municipal president at that time⁴⁴. After explaining my project to him and answering his questions, he called his entire cabinet together to discuss the purpose of my visit and to ask for their opinion and consent. I obtained their permission the same day and announced to the community my presence and the purpose of my study.

In order to build rapport, during my first week of pre-fieldwork I worked closely with the government, the health centre and schools. I wanted to be seen by as many people as possible and these were the places where people congregate the most. At every opportunity I introduced myself to men and women and explained my status of student and researcher. During the second week I carried out the 25 household surveys by randomly choosing one or two households in each street of the town. The

⁴⁴ Jorge Luis Hernández from PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) was in office was from 01 January, 2008 to 31 December, 2010.

information obtained in the surveys, the everyday contact with people from the community, and the information obtained in the local archives helped me to confirm that Cacaloxtepec was a suitable research location.

I also took the opportunity to find accommodation for the main fieldwork and, having considered a couple of offers to rent a room, I decided to live with Tania and her two daughters. My main reason for choosing her was the fact that her husband was an undocumented migrant worker in California and I saw this as a window of opportunity to follow the same family in the US.

On August 17, 2010 I arrived in San Bartolomé Quialana accompanied by Guadalupe Maldonado Sosa, the *Oportunidades*' community social worker. My first activities in Quialana were supported by Guadalupe who introduced me to the community doctor and nurse, and the municipal president and some of the officers. For the afternoon Guadalupe arranged an audience with Quialana's municipal president at that time. The municipal president and some government officers (mainly men) listened to my proposal and after several questions they allowed me to observe, carry out the household survey and be around the town during the pre-fieldwork, but they required extra appropriate documentation (letters from University). In less than a day I found myself very enthusiastic about Quialana as a community for my project.

In Quialana I followed the same strategy as in Cacaloxtepec; during the first week I walked around the town to familiarise people with my presence. I visited the schools, the Catholic Church and the health centre to talk about my project. Also in the first week the health centre allowed me to work with *promotoras de la salud* (health promoters), a group of appointed Quialanense women who look after the

health of the community by liaising with the community doctor. Every year the promoters carry out a survey in the town and coincidentally that task took place during the pre-fieldwork. I supported two women who visited approximately 30 houses around the community, a valuable opportunity to carry out my household survey. The following week Quialana was preparing for the town's annual week-long celebration, making an ideal opportunity for participant observation. This was also a chance to establish potential Quialanense contacts in the US, as some return for the festival.

Arranging my accommodation in Quialana was a bit more difficult than in Cacaloxtotec. I left the pre-fieldwork with two tentative offers of accommodation which were less than ideal⁴⁵. At the end of the pre-fieldwork I went back to the UK to assess my preliminary findings with my supervisors and to start preparations for the main fieldwork.

- **The fieldwork and participant observation**

In order to allow fieldwork in Mexico to inform that in US, and vice versa, I spent two periods of time in each location over a 12 month period (for a similar approach see Carrier 2006), as shown in Appendix 1.

I arrived in Cacaloxtotec with Tania, who had previously agreed to rent me a part of her house. Although I did not plan to learn Mixtec (because I was already learning Zapotec), during my first week of fieldwork I realised the importance of at least having a basic knowledge of it, so I took evening lessons with Valentina, Tania's

⁴⁵ One in the health centre located in the outskirts of the community, another came from the municipal president's daughter who wanted to rent me a very small room which was previously a bathroom.

mother. After two weeks of intense evening lessons I could greet inhabitants and ask them about their whereabouts.

In Quialana I lived with the family of the first female officer in the town, Guadalupe Martínez. Staying with Gudalupe's family was a great advantage; her father had migrated to the US in order to build their current house and at the time of the fieldwork five of Guadalupe's siblings were working and living in the US. I was asked to be a courier between the members of the family; taking food to the children in Anaheim and bringing photos and souvenirs back to Quialana. Furthermore, in anticipation of the fieldwork I took Zapotec lessons, which I continued while living in the community. The fact that I could sustain a basic conversation in Zapotec and Mixtec facilitated my acceptance in the communities and diminished my status as outsider.

In both communities I spent the first month of fieldwork as participant observer taking copious field notes, building my confidence and starting to choose my interviewees. Most of the field notes were not able to be taken on the spot but at every opportunity I wrote down key words or names that would allow me to remember the events of the day. Every day in the late afternoon I went back to my room to organise my next day's activities and write up my fieldwork diary.

As one of my strategies of integration in the communities I offered my help for different activities; in other words I gave my *tequio*. In Cacaloxtepic I helped government officer's wives to cook for special events, to drive the rubbish van and to clean the town water tanks. In the secondary school I also substituted for a teacher who reported ill for two weeks. In Quialana, I enrolled in the regional dance group, helped the health unit with administrative work and I also collaborated with some

families to cultivate their land and sell products in the market. As part of my reciprocal contribution to the community I helped the town secondary school with free afternoon English lessons, working with a group of ten regular students three times a week.

As top destination of Zapotec and Mixtec migrants in the US (Barabas 2008, López and Rusten 2004, Stephen 2008, Velasco Ortiz 2005,), the state of California was an obvious site for my research. I followed the routes of indigenous migrants from their community of origin to their workplace in the US, carrying out fieldwork in Greater Los Angeles, Anaheim and Madera, with people from Quialana, and in Stockton and Madera with people from Cacaloxtotec.

During the fieldwork in Greater Los Angeles and Anaheim I stayed with relatives in the city of Pomona. Due to the poor transport system in the region I rented a car which allowed me not only to meet the immigrants at short notice but also to stay until late when our talks were prolonged. For the fieldwork in Madera and Stockton I established a neutral point around the city of San Jose and from there I commuted to both cities by coach. I would spend an entire day in a specific city and later in the afternoon I would come back to San Jose.

The field research in the US was facilitated by people from Cacaloxtotec and Quialana who knew about my work in their communities of origin and were already waiting for me in California. My main Quialana contact in the US was the leader of a hometown association, Jaime, who invited me to several meetings to introduce me to more Quialanense and Oaxacans and gave me various telephone contacts of the same. I rang all of them but not all were happy to participate. Most of the refusals were based on religious grounds, especially from people from Quialana who had

become Jehovah's Witnesses and who argued that "because of our religion we are not comfortable to talk with you, we do not know what you will do with our information". For Cacaloxtepec my main contact was Tania's husband, Raimundo, who also provided me with a list of contacts in the US. As an additional access-route I approached three hometown associations in California: Frente Indígena Binacional, Radio Bilingüe and Lazos Oaxaqueños.

Due to the geographical dispersion of indigenous migrants, I did not attempt a household survey but focused on participant observation, interacting with the migrants in their everyday life, observing how they live, what they did when they were not working, whether they were involved in Mexican/indigenous associations, and how they perceived their migration experiences. Some of the migrants allowed me to accompany them while working.

Doing ethnographic research in multiple sites is challenging, as one is constantly negotiating access and adjusting to the appropriate dress and demeanour in each site. At the start of the fieldwork suspicions arose regarding my 'real' goal in the communities. Some people thought I was a religious missionary or a government official (see Karim 1993). One of the most difficult situations I faced was regarding religion. Although I do not practice or follow any religion, I visited churches, masses and services because these were the places where people congregated the most. I felt anxious because I did not want to be seen as an impostor. On several occasions I was asked to reveal my position or preferences concerning religion and politics, but I always took as neutral a stance as possible. Nonetheless I encountered some embarrassing situations, especially with religious ceremonies and food⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ On one occasion during my visit at the protestant church, a woman tried to evangelise me and prayed for me in front of the entire community. Apart from being embarrassed I disagreed with what

Finally my position as a *mestizo* female researcher played an important role during the fieldwork; however this is further discussed later in this chapter.

- **The interviews**

During the last two months of fieldwork I carried out 15 in-depth interviews in Cacaloxtepec and 17 in Quialana, plus several informal chats. In the second phase of the US field research I carried out 15 in-depth interviews (see Appendix 2). The decision to interview only 15 participants in the US lies in the fact that I had the opportunity to observe migrants when they returned to Mexico in the holiday period, which resulted in opportunities for further talks with them. The interviewees were chosen through a purposive sampling technique (Bryman 2008, p. 414) which was based on the results of the participant observation and immersion in the communities and US and urban Mexico diaspora.

As shown in Appendix 2, my interviewees comprised a wide range of ages in order to explore any differences in perspective. Some of the participants were interviewed twice to obtain further information; others were interviewed in different locations, six interviews were done in couples and one was a group interview. In terms of ethnicity, all of the interviewees considered themselves indigenous Mexicans or natives of the Americas,⁴⁷ with the exception of Patricia who defined herself as *mestizo*. For the US fieldwork, four interviews were conducted in Greater Los Angeles, three in Madera, one in Fresno, two in Anaheim, three in Mountain View

she was doing but I could not find a way to stop her and a few minutes after this I left the church politely. In terms of food, Cacaleño and Quialanense were very kind and every time I visited someone in their houses they offered me food. In most cases I ate gladly but in others I had to eat even if the dish was not to my palate or I had already eaten. I knew that a rejection could create a barrier between us and that was the last thing I wanted during the fieldwork.

⁴⁷ Jaime argued that for him the term “indigenous” has derogative connotations and for that reason he prefers to be called “native of the Americas”.

and two in Stockton⁴⁸. Moreover, at the time of the interviews, the indications were that only three US respondents were documented migrants.

The interviews were held in respondents' homes, workplaces and restaurants; and they lasted between one and a half to two hours. Moreover, seven further interviews were recorded with teachers in both indigenous communities but due to time restrictions these were not transcribed or translated but used as field notes. The interviews were held in Spanish or a mix of Spanish-Mixtec, Spanish-Zapotec or Spanish-English. All the interviews were transcribed and translated into English by the author making sure that important and key aspects of them were not "lost in translation".

Although I had a guide of interview questions (see Appendix 4), all the interviews tended to be open-ended questions. In other words, the interviews were not structured so they were perceived more like a chat than a formal interview, but without neglecting the question guide. Respondents were encouraged to tell their stories, show their feelings and use whatever language they felt more comfortable in.

3.4 Ethical considerations

For the project as a whole, the British Sociological Association (BSA) statement of Ethical Practice and The University of Warwick Ethical Conduct of Research have been consulted and analysed. The present study does not violate any of the statutes.

The BSA states that participation in social research should be based on the freely given informed consent of those studied (BSA 2010). This implies the responsibility of the researcher to give as much information as needed about the research, and in terms meaningful to possible participants. Thereby the participants are able to make

⁴⁸ For the fieldwork in Mexico, all of the interviews were conducted in the indigenous communities.

an informed decision whether or not they wish to participate in the study (Bryman 2008, p. 121). I always informed participants of my student status and the reasons for my research and I notified all of them that the interviews were recorded and transcribed and that parts of the interviews might be used in my thesis/publications, but without identifying them. Confidentiality of the interviews and notes of research have been maintained; the real names of the participants were not used and pseudonyms are used throughout to protect interviewees' identities. There are three exceptions to the previous statement with respondents who hold a public position. They are already "public" figures and even if I were to use pseudonyms, they would be easily identified due to the nature of their work. These three participants agreed to the use of their real name for this thesis.

I obtained verbal consent from all the participants and when someone refused to participate or did not wish to be recorded I always accepted their decision without insisting. Interviews which were not transcribed (e.g. with teachers) were written up in field notes. Since this research was carried out outside the United Kingdom, I also made sure that it did not affect or violate the civil and legal laws of the US, Mexico and indigenous communities.

Interviewing undocumented migrants in the US brings innumerable ethical issues. Although the Mexican diaspora in the US is well established and most Mexicans - indigenous and *mestizos* - help each other to live "under-cover", it was difficult to gain their trust and issues of confidentiality were acute. No detailed overview of the US respondents is provided in order to avoid giving away information that might put them at risk with immigration authorities.

Regarding the fieldwork in Oaxaca I decided to keep the real names of both communities and obtained permission to do so from the local authorities. If the project openly names the towns there is a possibility for further academic research, which at the same time might create greater opportunities and benefits for Cacaleño and Quialanense. In fact, the research done in San Bartolomé Quialana and chapters published in edited books in Mexico have served the authorities as tools to obtain attention from the Mexican federal government, international organisations (such as UNICEF) and artists. Finally, this work makes use of photographs for illustrative purposes only, and all the photographs were taken with permission.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Methods of analysis

Good multi-sited ethnography facilitates triangulation whereby multiple research techniques and data analysis can reinforce the findings (Blaxter *et al.* 2006). The information gathered in the interviews, informal chats and fieldwork notes were analysed through a process of coding, a tool of grounded theory⁴⁹ (Bryman 2008, p. 542) and assisted by the qualitative analysis software NVIVO 9.

During fieldwork the field notes were sub-divided into analytical, descriptive and methodological categories (Bernard 2000). Methodological notes dealt with technique in collecting data, descriptive notes contained my observations (watching and listening) and analytic notes laid out ideas about how I perceived-understood the situation of the indigenous communities and the diaspora.

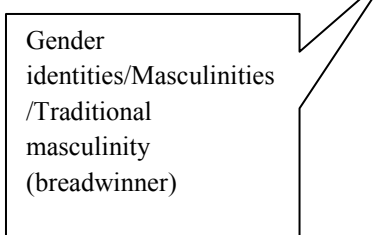
I then reviewed transcripts and field notes and clustered and categorized them according to their potential theoretical significance and what appeared to be

⁴⁹ Grounded theory is “theory that was derived from data systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process. In this method, data collection, analysis, and eventually theory stand in close relationship to one another” (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p. 12 cited in Bryman 2008).

prominent within the social world of the indigenous communities and the indigenous US diaspora. The coding was carried out in two phases: first a more detailed and open minded process to identify/generate new ideas and situations, second a more selective process, focusing on the codes which proved of most relevance in answering the research questions. Selective codification eventually led me to the creation of concepts and categories specifically related to my research. I pursued this step by a process of theoretical saturation⁵⁰. Using NVIVO 9 proved to be of great help because the software allowed me to create, re-create and modify codes while analysing the results of the codification. An example of the coding process is giving below:

From an interview:

Of course we do miss them [children], and of course we cry but we have to deal with it. It is like, only some days, sometimes we feel very sad and we want to go back to Mexico but after two or three weeks then we feel better and we continue with our work and our lives here. We as men we have to work and be strong especially if we have children



During the coding and conceptualization process, I was constantly comparing the original data, so that the links between them commented on each other and the indicators did not get lost (Angrosino 2007, p. 68)⁵¹. It is recognised that data

⁵⁰ Theoretical saturation is reached when “a) no new data or relevant data seem to be emerging regarding a category, b) the category is well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions demonstrating variation, and c) the relationship among categories are well established and validated” (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p. 212 cited in Bryman 2008).

⁵¹ It is important to mention that throughout the entire data analysis process, I used a gendered transnational migration lens.

analysis techniques based on coding and categorization are important tools to find patterns and conceptualise regularities in the data collected, but they might also tend to fragment and de-contextualise it (Punch 2005, cited in Pasura 2008), so to avoid this and highlight the indigenous migrant's interesting experiences obtained during the fieldwork, I also made use of narrative analysis.

Narrative analysis is an approach to the analysis of qualitative data that accentuates the stories that participants narrate about their way of life or a specific event (Bryman 2008). In narrative analysis the attention is focused on addressing "how do people make sense of what happened?" instead of "what happened?" (Ibid, p. 556). In this thesis I used narrative analysis as a supplementary method when analysing accounts of migratory experiences or family relations. It became clear that every respondent had unique understandings of the same events; for instance, while for a migrant crossing the Mexico-US border undocumented was a heroic act, for another migrant the same situation represented suffering and humiliation.

Since this thesis treats gender as a key factor in the study of migration, disaggregating the categories of female and male was a matter of utmost importance. In order to facilitate the analysis of gender relations and empowerment concepts, I sub-divided the female respondents into three age groups: 17-24 years old, 25- 59 years old and 50 plus years old. The classification was an outcome of the fieldwork, and was based on analysis of interviews and field notes which helped to illuminate the role of age/generational variables when considering changing gender relations and empowerment. I did not follow the same sub-division procedure with male and female migrants in the US due to the small sample and dispersed location.

3.5.2 Challenges while analysing data

I am aware of my responsibility in analysing and interpreting the experiences that both indigenous left-behind people and indigenous migrants shared with me in the process of this research. I am also aware of the powerful but potentially dangerous position that I have in identifying what matters, what people mean, and how they can be depicted and interpreted (Bryman 2008 pp.391-393). To address this I carried out this study reflexively. Reflexivity constantly required me to (re)question the possible assumptions that I might have made in the course of the research and to think about the implications of such assumptions for the research and its findings (DeTona *et al.* 2010). I want this study to be as transparent as possible, and to enable indigenous women and indigenous migrants to be enhanced, by listening to their voices, and so far I have shared my findings and articles/book chapters with them through social networks. During the fieldwork in both communities I gave *tequio* in “exchange” for their participation in the project. Moreover, I am very glad that I managed to become friends with respondents and inhabitants of both communities and we keep in contact through Facebook or email.

3.6 Gender and ethnicity in the fieldwork

As previously mentioned, in this thesis I pursue a feminist social constructivist approach. In terms of methods of analysis, a feminist approach should not fail to recognise the power imbalance between the researcher and researched and how aspects of the researcher (self-reflection) alters ethnographic practices (see Naples 2003). If as researcher one fails to explore how our personal, professional and structural positions frame social scientific investigation, one risks reproducing dominant gender, race and class biases (May 2001).

Like many Mexicans I have an indigenous background, but mine is a bit more recent than for most Mexicans. My maternal grandmother comes from a Nahua⁵² indigenous community in the central area of Mexico. In fact, my initial motivation to study indigenous Mexican people and their migration patterns can be traced to my memories of visiting my grandmother's community of origin and my own experiences as a migrant in Europe and in the US. Although I talked about my indigenous background, people from Quialana and Cacaloxtepic never saw me as "one of them". They even used to call me "la güerita" (the blond one)⁵³. This status gave me advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand being a female Mexican *mestizo*, doing research in a European university with the entire attendant privileges that this implies, highlighted on some occasions the inevitable differences between us. On the other hand people from both communities were surprised at my interest in their traditions, customs and worries. It was difficult for them to understand why someone who lives and travels "freely" to the places where they wish they could go had decided to come and live in a small town in Oaxaca.

Aspects of the researcher's selfhood articulate with the field research (Bell *et al.* 1993, p. 19. See also Macintyre 1993). In fact, gender and ethnicity (skin colour) might open or close doors to the researcher and shape the findings in particular ways (see Loftsdóttir 2002). Fieldwork involves complex relationships, which have to do with various kinds of power relations and interactions. These relations not only affect the quality and kind of data collected, but they have to do with historical relations of power and domination (Loftsdóttir 2002). Perceptions of power and

⁵² Nahua are descendents of the Aztecs.

⁵³ By European standards I am very far from being blond, however my town of origin (Mexico City), way of dressing and slighter less brown skin "whitened me" in Cacaleño and Quialanense' eyes.

domination between those researched and the researcher have been widely explored by Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (2007), who claims that racial/ethnic ideologies of superiority and privilege inherited from the colonial period might play an important role not only in the perception of the researcher but also for the kind of access s/he might obtain. For instance, if the researcher is identified (due to physical appearance) as a member of the dominant group, s/he might have restricted access to certain kinds of information; or in some cases s/he might not be allowed to carry out his/her research. It is important to note that the fact that I am a female *mestizo* Mexican influenced, in one way or another, the answers and attitudes of the participants.

Furthermore, before starting the fieldwork I was aware of the possible difficulties that my gender and ethnicity might pose, especially in the indigenous communities. Following her fieldwork experiences, Chiñas (1992) states that in the great majority of indigenous Mexican communities being a single woman outside the home is perceived as indecent. I certainly agree, and would go further by arguing that it is not only a characteristic of indigenous Mexican communities, but also a general perception of Mexican society⁵⁴. At the time of the fieldwork I was already married and I thought my civil status would give me an advantage in terms of people's perception. I also expected that although I was doing fieldwork in my country of birth, people from the communities would be likely to see me as a foreigner due to my birthplace (Mexico City).

During the fieldwork in both communities being a married woman gave me an invaluable advantage while interviewing other women. I had the opportunity to

⁵⁴ Take my own example, in my early 20s when living in Mexico City, I used to go out with my friends and on the occasions when I came back home late my father would say that "that was not the right behaviour for a decent Miss".

participate in many rituals and activities that are on exclusively female terrain (e.g. the kitchen). I was also allowed to visit women whenever I wanted without being judged by the community, and I was able to initiate conversations about sexual matters⁵⁵. My physical complexion (short, thin and looking younger than my age) also helped me to build rapport among young women. I remember spending hours with a group of teenage friends who had a lot to say about men, romance, music and fashion. However, being a married woman was not enough to negate my vulnerability as female ethnographer. Several studies have emphasized the difficulties for women ethnographers in terms of vulnerability to sexual assaults (Moreno 1995, Wilson 1995 cited in Loftsdóttir 2002), leading to the need for chaperones. Although I never felt in real danger during the fieldwork I protected myself through my conservative dress-code and personal space (avoiding physical contact). If I was talking or interviewing men I made sure to be in a public space or accompanied by children⁵⁶. Family visits also helped me to reduce my vulnerability⁵⁷, thus people in the community knew that “the husband who let me travel and be absent from home” did exist!

Building rapport among men proved to be a bit more difficult. During talks, interviews and social events I was treated as an honorary man by men and women. I was allowed to sit down at the same time as the men on the same table. Men offered

⁵⁵ Although being almost 30 years old and not having children after more than four years of marriage did cause astonishment and suspicion among many women and I think I would have had more opportunities to relate to them if I had had children.

⁵⁶ Especially in Santiago Cacaloxtotec, Tania's youngest daughter, 7 at the time, enjoyed accompanying me and was a great help both as 'chaperone' and because she knew names and news in the community.

⁵⁷ There was only one occasion where I felt threatened by a man in one of the communities who constantly invited me to go out with him. Every time I refused, saying that whatever he wanted to say he could say in public. One day a woman warned me that the man was telling everyone that he wanted to kidnap me, so I went to talk with the municipal president who assured me that he would talk with the man and resolve the situation.

me alcohol and cigarettes out of courtesy, but they assumed that I would refuse due to my female status. I refused the alcohol due to personal preferences but on several occasions I accepted the cigarettes and paradoxically that was my access into men's world. The act of smoking made men feel more relaxed while talking to me, generating valuable information. The examples given above show how while my status as female researcher put me in a vulnerable position, my racial and social class privilege gave me "access" to different experiences.

The dynamics of gender and ethnicity during the US fieldwork were completely different. Being a woman travelling and working outside home aroused no questions or suspicion among indigenous men and women living in the US, I did not need to smoke to interact with men and there was no need to worry about my status as a "decent woman". My dress code was more relaxed (although I always kept it modest) and my birth-place did not 'whiten' me in the same way; in the US I was just one more Mexican, a Latina or Hispanic. These rather different experiences corroborate Loftsdóttir's (2002) argument that perceptions of fieldwork identity are fluid and contextual (p. 306).

3.7 Conclusion

Notwithstanding the methodological and practical challenges that multi-sited ethnography entails, I have argued that this kind of methodology suits the study of indigenous transnational migrants and communities. By travelling and moving as transmigrants do it is possible to better understand not only a bit of their life experiences but also the connections, relationships and impacts that migrants construct between their communities of origin and destination. Moreover, multi-sited ethnography has the advantage to inform the different sites where the

ethnography takes place, which results in opportunities to reflect on the project itself and to observe the impact of the social context over the subjects of research.

In order to answer the research questions, this study used participant observation and in-depth interviews as the main methods for data generation. Participant observation was divided in pre-fieldwork and in the main fieldwork in the two indigenous communities in Oaxaca and in the US. During the pre-fieldwork I carried out a partial house survey which served to introduce me to the communities and provide some quantitative data. I carried out 32 interviews in the indigenous communities and 15 with migrants in the US. The interviewees were chosen based on the results of the participant observation in the multi-sited fieldwork.

The information gathered in the interviews, informal chats and fieldwork notes were analysed through a process of coding assisted by NVIVO 9 qualitative software. In order to avoid de-contextualisation and fragmentation of the data, this research also uses narrative analysis as a reinforcement technique of the main segmenting, coding and categorisation techniques.

This chapter has also made explicit that during the entire project ethical considerations were observed. Participants and interviewees were always informed of the purpose of this research, and confidentiality of the interviews, interviewees and field notes was maintained. Finally this chapter has also explored how aspects of my identity as researcher, such as gender and ethnic identity, play a role in the course of the ethnographic work and also in the kind of data collected from the informants.

Chapter 4. Introducing the communities

4.1 Introduction

To understand the importance and meaning of migration from indigenous communities one cannot start an analysis at the Mexico-US border. In most cases the decision to migrate is strongly influenced by the family and community (Cohen 2004) and as Hernández-Díaz states, Oaxacans “migrate with their communities on their backs” (2011a, p. 13; my translation). Oaxacan migrants come from places where community and citizenship are understood in particular ways that clash with the dominant Mexican understanding of citizenship. This chapter introduces the communities where this research took place, their political and organisational system, their ceremonial life and also explores why it is important to substantiate their family and community customs and traditions.

4.2 The Oaxacan Context

The state of Oaxaca is located in the south of Mexico. Its western border is with the state of Guerrero, in the northwest it borders Puebla, in the north Veracruz, in the east Chiapas and its southern border is the Pacific Ocean (see Map 1). The estate of Oaxaca is divided into eight regions: Mixteca, Valle Centrales, Costa, Istmo, Sierra Norte, Sierra Sur, Cañada and Papalóapam.

Oaxaca is located in the so-called Mesoamerica area where two important civilizations developed: the Zapotec Empire which flourished from 900 B.C. to 1300 AD; and the Mixtec Empire which overthrew the Zapotec Empire in the fourteenth century (Delgado de Cantú 2002) and was itself overthrown by the Spanish conquest.

Map 1 The state of Oaxaca



Source: Author's work

★ *Communities studied*

○ *Market towns*

● *Oaxaca's capital city*

In 2010 the state of Oaxaca registered 3.8 million inhabitants (47 percent male and 53 percent female) scattered in 570 municipalities (counties)⁵⁸. The state has the highest indigenous population in Mexico⁵⁹; 2.3 million people speak an indigenous language (INEGI 2010)⁶⁰ and they are grouped - by the Mexican Government - into 16 ethno linguistic groups (CDI 2011)⁶¹. The Mixtec language, with 423,215

⁵⁸ For administrative purposes, the 570 municipalities are grouped in 30 districts, and for electoral purposes the state is divided into 11 federal districts and 25 state districts.

⁵⁹ Besides the indigenous population, Oaxaca has an important afro-Mexican and mestizo population (Hernández-Díaz 2010, p. 17).

⁶⁰ According to the 2010 Mexican census, there are 6.6 million people who speak an indigenous language, however, 15.7 million people identified at the census as indigenous/native.

⁶¹ See: Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas (www.cdi.gob.mx). The 16 ethno-linguistic groups in Oaxaca are: Amuzgos, Chatinos, Chinantecos, Chochos, Chontales,

speakers, and the Zapotec language, with 410,901 speakers⁶², are the second and third most spoken indigenous language in Mexico (Hernández-Díaz 2010).

4.2.1 Political parties or customary law?

The first Mexican state to legislate - at least at a formal level - for the rights of indigenous people was Oaxaca, and it did so before the Mexican federal state. In 1990 the Oaxacan Constitution recognised and declared in six articles the pluriethnic composition of the state, the characteristics of indigenous people, the protection and promotion of indigenous culture and organizational forms, the recognition of traditional systems of administration and justice, and the state's obligation to provide bilingual and bicultural education (Anaya Muñoz 2005). Until 1995 every municipality in Oaxaca elected their representatives through the procedure established by national and state constitutions, that is by political party competition. The customary law regime was practiced before 1995 but was not legally recognised or was restricted to the internal process of the PRI candidate selection (Durand Ponte 2007). However, in 1990 the electoral code of Oaxaca (*Código de Instituciones Políticas y Procedimientos Electorales del Estado de Oaxaca*, CIPPEO) was reformed to incorporate self-government rights (customary law) as a procedure to choose municipal authorities and representatives.

Communities in Oaxaca thus had an opportunity to “choose”, after fulfilling some requirements (see Chapter 2), what kind of government they wanted to practice. Cacaloxtotec decided in favour of political parties and Quialana chose customary law. However, the system and practices are not clear-cut and both communities, as

Cuicatecos, Huaves, Ixcatecos, Mazatecos, Mixes, Mixtecos, Náhuatl, Popolucas, Triquis, Zapotecos and Zoques.

⁶² Indigenous languages with the largest number of speakers in Mexico are: Nahuatl (1,376,026), Maya (759,000), Mixteco (423,216), Zapotec (410,901) and Tzeltal (371,730).

well as many others in Oaxaca, tend to blur the lines between systems, which makes the study of these communities even more interesting. In the following sections I explain and analyse each government system in each community and explore how they impact on everyday life.

4.3 Santiago Cacaloxtepic

4.3.1 Historic facts and general overview of the community

Santiago Cacaloxtepic is located in the Mixteca region,⁶³ 14.5 km south of the market town of Huajuapán de León. Its distance to the state capital, Oaxaca City, is approximately 207 km (see Map 3). Cacaloxtepic is a náhuatl name that means 'crown of the cave'⁶⁴. According to the records, the town was founded in the seventeenth century during Spanish colonisation, led locally by the Earl of Monterrey Alvaro Manrique de Zúñiga Guzmán, who issued the authorization to found the *Guajuapa* province (nowadays Huajuapán de León). Before and after the Spanish colonisation the native Mixtec dwellers of what we now know as Huajuapán de León settled down along the Mixtec River in the territory that is now Santiago Huajolotitlán and San Francisco Yosocuta. However, when the Spanish crown divided the land among the *encomenderos*⁶⁵, native people were forced to move to

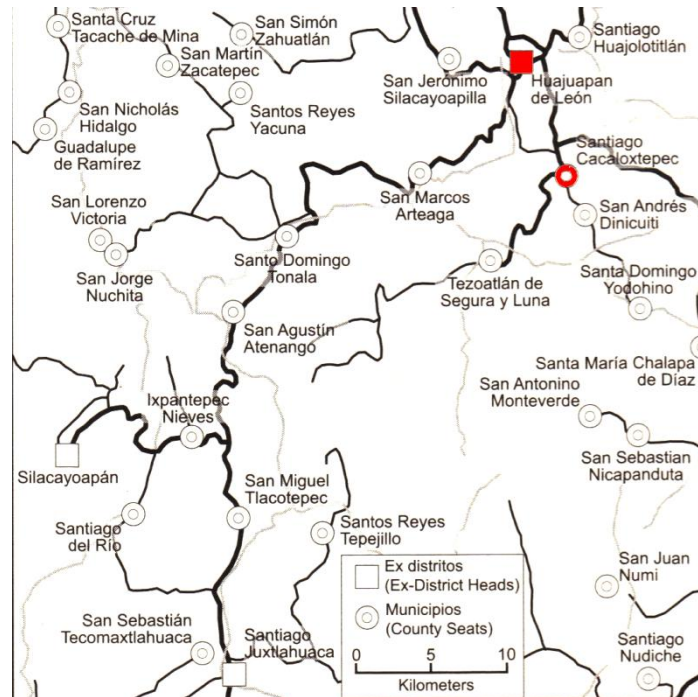
⁶³ The *Mixteca* region is located in the central part of Mexico in the states of Puebla, Guerrero, and Oaxaca. In Oaxaca the *Mixteca* region includes the districts of Silacayoapan, Huajuapán, Juxtlahuaca, Coixtlahuaca, Nochixtlan, Teposcolula, Tlaxiaco, Putla and Jamiltepec. (Hernández-Díaz 2011, p. 14).

⁶⁴ It has a nahuátl name because Mixtecs were under the domain of the Aztec empire.

⁶⁵ *Encomenderos* were Spanish people who were granted an encomienda by the Spanish crown: land and a specified number of natives for whom they were to take responsibility. In theory, the receiver of the grant was to protect the natives from warring tribes and to instruct them in the Spanish language and in the Catholic faith: in return they could extract tribute from the natives in the form of labour, gold or other products.

less fertile and isolated lands. From those displaced Mixtec native people, Santiago Cacaloxtotec⁶⁶ was founded.

Map 2 Santiago Cacaloxtotec and its surroundings



Source: Modified from Stephen 2007, p.2

● Santiago Cacaloxtotec

■ Market Town

In 1844 Santiago Cacaloxtotec became an *agencia de policía* (civil parish) of Huajuapán de León, some decades later (23 October 1891) Cacaloxtotec received the title of *agencia municipal* (district), and finally on 29 October, 1938 Santiago Cacaloxtotec formally became an independent municipality (Plan de Desarrollo Rural Sustentable 2005).

The only ways to reach Cacaloxtotec are by collective taxi⁶⁷ or private transport. At its entrance, although a small town, Cacaloxtotec impresses with its tidiness. Right

⁶⁶ There are records that show that Santiago Cacaloxtotec has also been known as Cacaloxtepeque and Jacaloxtotec.

in the middle the three main buildings of the town can be seen: the government building (*presidencia*), the Catholic Church of Santiago Apostol, and the empty building that once housed a Mixtec hat factory (*Impulsora Ejidal del Sombrero Mixteco*). Most of the town streets have recently been paved and only those at the edges are still dirt tracks. Along the streets impressive houses of two or three storeys contrast with the still numerous small and modest clay houses of the town. The corner of Hidalgo Street and Zaragoza Street is the centre of economic activities. A shop selling tortillas, a grocery store, two butchers, a pharmacy, the taxi site, a Herbalife stand and a gift shop are clustered in less than a hundred meters. However, most general shopping is done in Huajuapán de León, using the small shops in Cacaloxtepec only in emergencies. Because not many houses have had the opportunity to install landlines and there is no mobile phone signal, a corner shop has installed a public telephone service.

The Mexican national census 2010 records 1686 inhabitants for Cacaloxtepec, 878 women and 808 men (INEGI 2010), but in fact no more than 600 inhabitants live currently in the community. According to the National Population Commission (*Comisión Nacional de Población*, CONAPO) the index of marginalization in Cacaloxtepec has decreased from a “high level of marginalization” (2005) to “medium” (2010)⁶⁸. Notwithstanding this “improvement”, the town is still the target of several Mexican federal development programmes. Currently Cacaloxtepec receives *Oportunidades*, *Procampo*, *70 y mas*, *Escuelas de Calidad* (Quality

⁶⁷ The collective taxis are compact cars designed for five passengers including the driver. However the taxis will take six people - two passengers at the front - and nobody wears seat belts. The fare is £1 return from Huajuapán de León.

⁶⁸ The index of marginalization prepared by CONAPO is based on the following variables: education, income, dwelling and population distribution. There are five levels of marginalization: very high, high, medium, low and very low (CONAPO 2010).

Schools), *Aula abierta* (Open Classroom), *Liconsa* (government corner shop) and the state programme ITA-YEE saving funds⁶⁹.

The town has a rural medical surgery established by the *Oportunidades* programme (which offers its service at no cost to those enrolled in the programme), and two private surgeries. The average years of education for residents is 5.2, which is below the state average (6.9) and national average (8.6) (INEGI 2010). Cacaloxtotec has one pre-school institution (nursery) *Benito Juárez*, a rural primary school *Ignacio Zaragoza* and a distance learning (telesecundaria) secondary school. To achieve further education (A' levels equivalent, college and university) Cacaleño must commute to urban areas.

The lack of general resources, teachers and the fact that they are rural and distance learning schools respectively, has meant that the primary school and the secondary school in Cacaloxtotec are not very popular.

Parents prefer to send their children to nearby towns to pursue their education. Currently there are only 80 students at the primary school and only four teachers for six grades. Teachers perform balancing acts trying to teach two school grades at the

⁶⁹ Oportunidades is a federal programme run by the Social Development Secretariat (SEDESOL) and IMSS, that aims to improve opportunities for families who live in extreme poverty (SEDESOL 2011). Procampo is run by the Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food (SAGARPA) and gives economic and technical support to peasants in rural communities. 70 y mas (70 or over) is a federal programme that provides economic support to people who are 70 years old or over. Elderly people receive 1,000 pesos (£50) every two months. Escuelas de Calidad and Aula Abierta are run by the Public Education Secretariat (SEP). The programme covers 50 percent of the cost of the preparation of school dinners. ITA-YEE is a cooperative association exclusively for women. The programme allows its members to save, gain interest and ask for loans. To be a member costs a minimum of 50 pesos (£3).

same time, and in the distance learning secondary school there are only 15 students divided in three grades⁷⁰.

Photo 1 Cacaleño waiting to receive their benefits from 70 y mas federal programme



Photo taken by the author.

More than 60 percent of the population speak Mixtec (indigenous language) and Cacaloxtotec is the only town where Mixtec is still spoken as the main language despite its relative proximity to the market town⁷¹. Every Monday is market day and a few people from the neighbouring towns come to trade regional products. Cacaleño recount that years ago market days were very busy as people from other

⁷⁰ Each grade has a teacher-guide who controls TV programmes broadcast by the Public Education Secretariat (SEP), students take notes and after one hour move onto another subject.

⁷¹ Although the Mixteca region is considered an indigenous region due to its particular social organisation and traditions, a significant proportion of its inhabitants have abandoned the use of the Mixtec language. Notwithstanding that Santiago Cacaloxtotec still keeps the use of the language, unfortunately children and teenagers understand the language but do not speak it anymore.

towns and even from Puebla (neighbouring state) would come to Cacaloxtotec to trade palm woven products, and a large market place was built. Unfortunately these days, the market building is only used during the annual celebration of the town and palm weaved products are not any more commercialized.

4.3.2 Political and organisational system

Cacaloxtotec has chosen to elect their representatives by political party competition, but in practice, the process also involves customs and traditions linked with the Catholic Church. Until the late 1950s Cacaloxtotec was *de facto* ruled by customary law⁷², but then, as elder inhabitants recount, the PRI “invited” them to use the political party system in order to obtain greater economic support from the state government. This change in the style of government coincided with the establishment of the Mixtec Hat factory (Impulsora Ejidal del Sombrero Mixteco) on 2 August 1967. PRI approached one of the most influential citizens of Cacaloxtotec at that time and negotiated the establishment of the party in the town in exchange for establishing the hat factory⁷³. The parties that currently have an important presence in Cacaloxtotec are PRI and PAN but some small groups support PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution) and Convergencia⁷⁴. In Santiago Cacaloxtotec women obtained the right to vote with the introduction of political parties⁷⁵, but indigenous women’s tangible political participation started at committee level no more than a decade ago. Cacaleño can be very engaged in

⁷² *De jure*, every town and municipality in Mexico had to “elect” their representatives, but in indigenous communities leaders were chosen internally under customary law and then ascribed to a political party; which in most cases was PRI (see Hernández-Díaz 2007a).

⁷³ Other political parties, like PAN (National Action Party), also gained followers by offering economic support to Cacaleño.

⁷⁴ Convergencia Political Party

⁷⁵ Women in Mexico obtained the right to vote in 1953.

political issues, even young children talk of “those who are from PRI or those who are from PAN”. Party politics is a family issue that might strongly unite or even separate entire families.

Each party has a committee which selects prospective candidates to run for local government positions through public vote⁷⁶. Party committees work very much like the general assemblies in the communities ruled under customary law. Although men and women participate in party meetings, the leaders of the party are men and often committee members are former municipal (male) presidents (this is the case in PRI and PAN). It is well known that lobbying takes place before committees meet and that outcomes may be determined in advance. Conflicts among the members of the party are not uncommon, and if a member who wishes to be internally elected as municipal president candidate is unsuccessful s/he might offer support (generally clandestinely) to the opposition party.

Prestige and seniority are still important even within the political party system but being a permanent resident in the town is not a pre-requisite for standing for election. However being from Cacaloxtepic (in the sense of being born there) is a requirement that must be fulfilled without exception. Once the runner for municipal president is chosen in each party’s general meeting, then the potential officers and substitute officers are also chosen. Every three years (six months before the election takes place) in the party’s general meeting their members shout out their favourites to then submit them to the vote. Each political position (municipal president and officers) should have a substitute, but these positions are not very popular among the party members: “being a substitute and being nothing is the same” (Martha).

⁷⁶ Members of the party select candidates publicly among themselves. Members propose aloud internal candidates and then these candidates are subjected to a round of public votes (raising hands).

Candidates for police officers, the mayor and a substitute mayor are also named during the party meetings. Once the runners are chosen (*planilla*) in PRI and PAN (and in some cases PRD) the political campaign starts, not constrained to the political territory of Cacaloxtpec, but extended to all those places where Cacaleño have moved and settled⁷⁷. Election day is dictated by the state electoral body and every Cacaleño who holds an official voting card (issued by the federal electoral body) is allowed to vote for their preferred candidate. Municipal elections are ballot-boxed and people in Cacaloxtpec tend to vote for their party of preference even if the candidate representing the party is not to their liking⁷⁸.

The current government⁷⁹ (2011-2013) in Cacaloxtpec (see Figure 3) is led by the municipal president Silvino Francisco Martínez, his eight officers (*regidores*) and his administrative team.

As part of the democratic practices of the Municipal Law in Oaxaca, the government of every municipality should maintain a balance among political party forces. In order to achieve this, the political party in power should give at least two office-positions (*regidurías*) to the opposition party (the party which lost the elections). For this administration the Ecology office and the Grave Yards and Public Lighting offices are led by PRI members. The administrative team are employed by the local government and they receive a monthly salary of approximately 2,500 Pesos (£100).

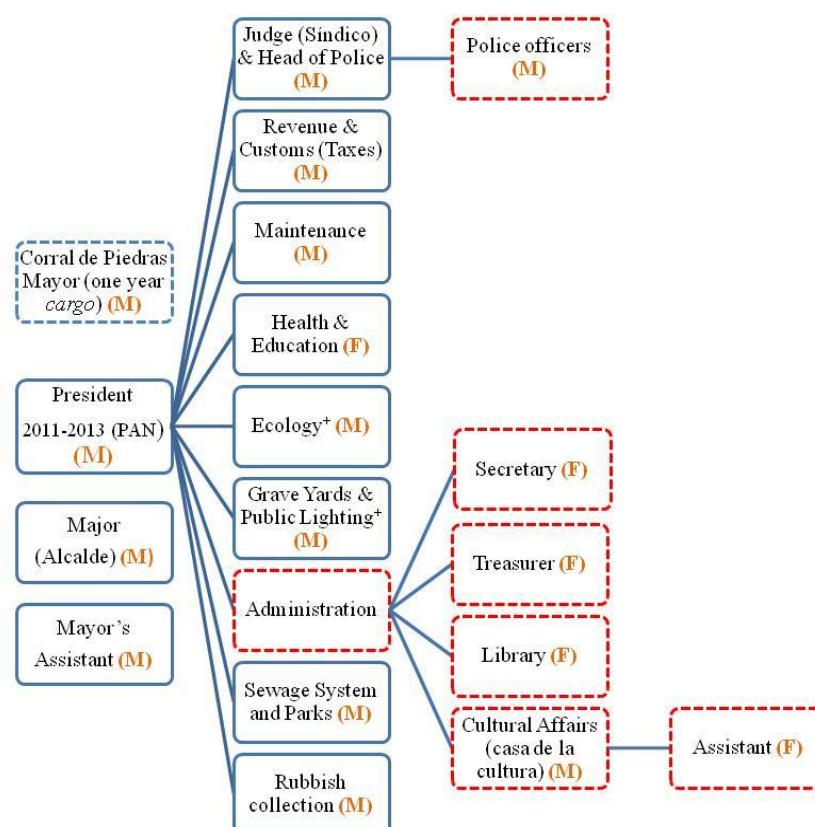
⁷⁷ Campaigns take place in Huajuapán, Puebla, Mexico City and its outskirts, Veracruz etc. See the campaign event organised by PAN in 2010: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODEu67OFKOg>. In most cases candidates walk door to door to convince inhabitants. PAN and PRI also organise dances and gatherings for Cacaleño, during which the candidates do talk about their proposals but mainly try to convey that they are trustworthy.

⁷⁸ Contrary to the UK, in Mexico people tend to vote for a particular person aligned to a particular party rather than for the party itself. However, in some communities, like in the case of Cacaloxtpec, people vote for the candidate who belongs to the party of their preference.

⁷⁹ In August 2010 when I started the fieldwork PRI was ruling the community in their last year of a three year government, and in January 2011 PAN took office. The party transition was a violent one and during the campaign parties defamed each other's candidates through leaflets that were delivered house by house at midnight.

Apart from the person in charge of cultural affairs, the rest of the employees in the administrative sector are women. The police body of Cacaloxtpec has not been officially recognised by the state of Oaxaca as a municipal police force⁸⁰. Police officers (all male) wander around the town only during the night or on special occasions such as the annual celebration.

Figure 3 Political and Administrative Organisation in Santiago Cacaloxtpec



Notes:

* Offices granted to the opposition party (PRI)

(M) Male Officer, (F) Female Officer

Those in red dotted boxes are treated as employees but are appointed by the assembly of the political party in power.

The small civil parish of Corral de Piedras depends politically and economically on Cacaloxtpec. Although the two communities form one political entity under the name of Santiago Cacaloxtpec, each community has a different way of organizing its government⁸¹.

Source: Fieldwork, author design.

⁸⁰ Police officers have not received any specific training and do not carry guns.

⁸¹ Corral de Piedras, located approximately 5 kms away from Cacaloxtpec, is ruled by customary law. Corral de Piedras has the power and autonomy to determine their laws and their everyday practices and these must be respected and incorporated by the Cacaloxtpec municipal government. Although I visited Corral de Piedras several times, the scope of this research only considers the community of Santiago Cacaloxtpec.

Although the mayor (*alcalde*) is integrated in the political organisation of the town, he does not make any political decisions. The main function of the mayor's office is to link the political and administrative life of the town with its ceremonial life. The mayor should have wide experience in the ceremonial life of the town; for instance, it could be advantageous for the mayor to have been the main annual celebration sponsor (*mayordomo*).

Silvino Martínez, the current municipal president, is the only member of the government body who has a higher education degree, as a secondary school teacher; the rest of the officers only finished either primary or secondary school. The municipal president and the mayor were born in Cacaloxtepec but have lived most of their life outside the town and have their current residence in different regions⁸². All except two officers (health and education, and ecology) have been long-term migrants outside and within Mexico. For instance three of the officers returned from the US in 2010, while four officers, the treasurer and the mayor's substitute have businesses in Cacaloxtepec and in Huajuapán de León⁸³; they combine their government work with their business or take time off. The entire body of government as well as the employees have received training in governmental issues and administration in Oaxaca City, however they claim that it was insufficient for their current positions.

Even though they are not depicted in the political and administrative organisation of the town, officers' wives - and now one husband - and the municipal president's

⁸² Silvino Martínez has his residency in Nochixtlán, Oaxaca; and the mayor in Chimalhuacán Estado de México, on the outskirts of Mexico City.

⁸³ The judge or legal representative (*sindico*) owns a video and photo studio in Huajuapán de León, the health and education officer has a corn drinks (*atole*) business, the ecology officer owns a tomato greenhouse and the maintenance officer has a livestock business. The treasurer owns a small Amway centre in Huajuapán de León and the mayor's substitute has a small corner shop.

wife get involved in the Cacaloxtotec political arena. Officers' spouses, mostly wives, are in charge of the development family (DIF) office, which organises events for special occasions such as children's day and mothers' day. However, since their main function is to cater (cook and clean) for those important events, Goldrin (2001) argues that this kind of participation only reinforces the idea of women as passive subjects. Nonetheless, some officers' wives expressed that these activities have been "an opportunity to learn. I had a great experience working along with my husband" (Imelda, wife of the former judge).

The local government (*cabildo*) is supported by committees which require the participation of Cacaleño. The committees⁸⁴ are the baseline of the government and town; through them village needs are addressed via links with the main federal and state government institutions that serve the community such as schools (Public Education Secretariat, SEP), the surgery (Mexican Social Security Institute, IMSS and Social Development Secretariat, SEDESOL) and communal land (Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food, SAGARPA). The committees are formed by Cacaleño who live physically in the community. Cacaleño take turns every so often (two to three years) to be part of a committee; they do not receive any payment and serve between one and three years. The new members of a committee are named by the leaving committee based on their relationships with institutions. For instance, if a family has a child at the primary school, it is likely that a member of that family will be part of the primary school committee. Every committee has a president, a treasurer, a secretary and at least five members. The committee's president is the liaison with those who run the institutions in the area of the committee's work (i.e. teachers, doctors, and nurses).

⁸⁴ Currently there are seven committees: Catholic Church, health, primary school, secondary school, nursery, general town cleaning and communal land.

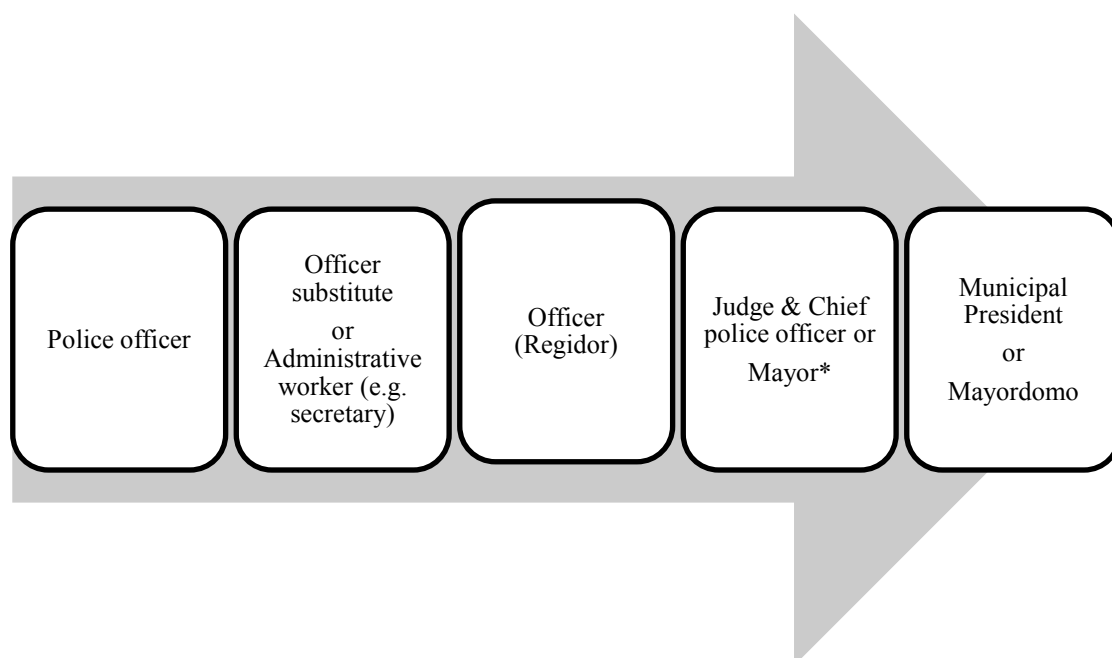
Finally, *tequio* is still practiced in Cacaloxtepec. The common practice is to use the loud-hailer system from the government building to “invite” Cacaleño men and women to participate in the improvement of the community. There is no penalty for refusal to participate, however willingness to participate is taken into consideration for future *cargos* in the community. While I was there the municipal president organised a *tequio* to restore the road that connects the town with Huajuapán de León. Many Cacaleño responded to the call, men worked long hours covering pot-holes and women cooked lunch for the workers. Before starting *tequio* activities, *tequio* workers should “ask permission” from the earth and nature to work. This takes place with a sprinkle of *mescal* in the place where the work will take place, after which every dweller should take a shot of *mescal* as a sign of respect.

The idea of *cargos* and *tequio* in Cacaloxtepec might contradict the previous political organisation description; however, as previously mentioned, Cacaloxtepec engages in “mixed practices” within the political parties and within ceremonial activities. Political and administrative positions (e.g. officers or police officers) are taken into consideration within the *cargo* system and vice versa, and in many cases one person can officially fulfil an administrative-political *cargo* and a religious one at the same time (e.g. the ecology officer can also be a *cofradía mayordomo*). *Cargo* positions are cumulative through Cacaleño’ life; a Cacaleño could have been a police officer twenty years ago, an administrative worker five years ago and currently be an officer in the government; in a few years this Cacaleño could be the municipal president.

The cargo-system ladder identified in Cacaloxtepec is shown in Figure 4. It is important to point out that it has been going through a series of modifications and

changes originated by internal and external factors. For instance, the current president has not risen up the *cargo*-system ladder but been elected due to his academic achievements. The integration of women (health and education officers) within the political organisation is also an important modification to the traditional cargo ladder.

Figure 4 Cargo-system ladder in the “mixed practice” style of government of Santiago Cacaloxtotec



Note: The positions (cargos) are cumulative and can be performed at different stages of Cacaleño lives.

*The position of mayor and *mayordomo* has a place in the religious cargo ladder which is further explained in the following section.

Source: Fieldwork, author design.

4.3.3 Ceremonial life

Cacaloxtotec's ceremonial life⁸⁵ is organized by the mayor, led by the *Mayordomo* (annual celebration sponsor) and with important participation by the town's Catholic

⁸⁵ Although ceremonial life is very much related with the Catholic faith, in this work the term ceremonial life is used instead of religious life because the former includes non-religious activities.

priest and church warden team. The ceremonial life goes hand in hand with the Catholic faith and is also influenced by some indigenous traditions. The base of ceremonial life in Cacaloxtotec is the so-called *cofradías* or “saint-devotion groups”. *Cofradías* are associations of Catholics who gather around an invocation or devotion of Christ, Lady Mary or a Saint, with religious purpose. Every Cacaleño belongs to a *cofradía*, no matter whether they live in Cacaloxtotec or not⁸⁶. As soon as Cacaleño get married or cohabit, the mayor assigns them to a *cofradía* and membership of a *cofradía* is based on the married couple⁸⁷. Belonging to a *cofradía* requires economic and religious participation, and the mayor has the right to demand participation⁸⁸. Each *cofradía* should also have a *mayordomo* and at least two helpers (*diputados*), who function as the administrators, as well as general members. The role of *mayordomo* and helpers is rotated among the members of the *cofradía*, so every member⁸⁹ gets to be *mayordomo*. Previously, refusing to be *mayordomo* was strongly criticised by the community and if the family did not have enough resources or money to carry out the duty, members would go into debt to fulfil their community obligations. However, nowadays it is possible to refuse to be a *mayordomo* if the refusal is seen as justified (e.g. lack of money or illness).

The celebration of a *cofradía* takes place over three days. The first day is called Day of Hope (*Día de Alba*), *cofradía* members extend a formal invitation to the

⁸⁶ In Cacaloxtotec there are 29 recognised *cofradías* and 17 non-recognised *cofradías* called instead fraternities (*hermandades*).

⁸⁷ For those who are not yet married it is possible to join the *cofradía* of Santa Teresita de Jesús (exclusively for single women), and the *cofradía* of San Felipe de Jesús (exclusively for single men).

⁸⁸ This government has contemplated removing citizenship rights from those Cacaleño who do not contribute monetarily to their *mayordomías*.

⁸⁹ Let us not forget that members are married couple or partners, but the title of *mayordomo* is given to the husband. During the *mayordomía* men and women have specific gendered activities: women cook and men light fireworks.

municipal president and officers to have lunch at the *cofradía*-house and to take flowers to the church. At least one member of the government should attend the celebration and the *cofradía* cannot take place if the government is not involved. The second day is a Day of Mass; a mass is celebrated in honour of the Saint and all the inhabitants (except the few of them who are not Catholic) are invited to take part. Beforehand the Saint's image "walks" around the town, ending up at the Church. Everyone is invited to walk behind the image and while walking people recite Catholic rosaries. That evening the *cofradía* offers food to the entire town and fireworks are lit. Food is prepared and served by the female members of the *cofradía* but they are not allowed to eat until all men have finished eating. The third day is exclusively devoted to administrative matters. The members of the *cofradía* check numbers and how much they spent and whether they managed to collect some money during the celebration.

The main ceremonial event of the year in Cacaloxtpec is on 25 July when the main saint of the town, Saint Santiago Apostol⁹⁰, is venerated. Preparations for such an important day take eleven months prior to the festivity. The *mayordomo* and his helpers collect money and organise the week-long celebration, which combines masses, weddings, baptisms, confirmations and so on. It also includes what Cacaleño call "mundane events", sports tournaments, fireworks, dances, and bullfights.

The role of *mayordomo* is one of the most important within indigenous communities in Oaxaca and in Cacaloxtpec and this position has so far always been designated to a married man. The *mayordomo* leads and sponsors the annual town celebration

⁹⁰ Saint James in English.

and although his wife (and his entire family) works hard as well, the honour is given to the married man. To become a *mayordomo* one should without doubt be born in the town and observe good behaviour over all: prestige and great commitment are needed. In Cacaloxtepic the *mayordomo*⁹¹ should have previously been a helper of the *cofradía* and should also be able to invest/spend generously on the annual celebration.

Photo 2 *Cofradía* ritual in Santiago Cacaloxtepic. The churchwarden and the mayor at the front followed by the officers



Photo taken by the author.

For the rest of the year, ceremonial life is guided by the *cofradías*. Unlike the *mayordomo* of the annual celebration, the mayordomos in *cofradías* are only required to remain in their position for at least one year, although some of them

⁹¹ The *mayordomo* of the annual celebration should remain in the cargo for three years

might serve up to six years. Except for the *cofradía* formed by single women, all the other *cofradías* are led by male *mayordomos*.

The organisation of ceremonial life has undergone some important changes. According to several conversations with Ricardo, the main churchwarden, approximately 15 years ago the church team had 16 members who served in the administration of ceremonial life in the town, all male: six churchwardens (*sacristanes*), two “saint-devotion group” organisers (*fiscales*) and eight people who were in charge of the church bells (*campaneros*). At that time the church team did not receive any payment and the positions were an obligatory service to the community.

Photo 3 The Saint’s image goes out for a “walk” joined by the entire town



Photo taken by the author

Nowadays there are only two people in charge of the church bells, one “saint-devotion group” organiser and one churchwarden. They now receive a small payment which is given by the municipal government “otherwise nobody would participate [...] They [Cacaleño] now argue based on their human rights. Previously if someone refused to give his service, he would have finished in prison” (Ricardo).

4.3.4 Traditions, customs and the family

Every Cacaleño should get baptised, confirmed and celebrate their first communion⁹². Women also celebrate their fifteenth and eighteenth birthdays with big parties. The central characters of the festivities are the godparents because becoming *compadres*⁹³ (fraternal friend) is a great honour: “Noooo, never! You cannot refuse a petition to be a godfather for a baptism. It brings bad luck! Even if you do not have money you should do it” (Ismael).

Courting and dating is allowed in the town but not physical contact in public. Previously marriages tended to be endogenous but nowadays it is much more acceptable to marry someone from outside the community. Eloping, or as Cacaleño call it, “stealing the bride”, is a common practice that brings dishonour to the family but can be easily solved with a quick marriage. In cases of traditional marriage the groom and his family visit the house of the bride to discuss the marriage. The groom should bring chocolate and bread to share with the bride’s immediate and extended family. The elders from both families sit in the centre of the garden and give advice to the couple. A civil and a religious ceremony is a rule and the groom’s family should absorb all the expenses. Divorce is not well accepted and if a married couple

⁹² 90 per cent of the population in the town is still Catholic.

⁹³ The *compadrazgo* figure is not exclusive to Zapotec and Mixtec but common across Mexico. In rural areas choosing a *compadre* is based more on prestige and honour than economic grounds, and *compadrazgo* are strong long-term relationships.

is going through a difficult time the extended family of both sides come to discuss the partnership issues to find a solution. Being a single mother is still seen as a shameful situation for the entire family and in some cases women have to leave the town to “save the family’s honour”.

Last, but not least, in Cacaloxtotec, men and women have the *de jure* and *de facto* right to own land and/or property equally. Parents bequeath property to sons and daughters but male children might still obtain more privileges. For instance, it is still a tradition to leave the family home (parent’s house) to the eldest son after he marries.

4.4 San Bartolomé Quialana

4.4.1 Historical facts and general overview of the community

San Bartolomé Quialana (Quialana) is located in Oaxaca’s Central Valley region⁹⁴, 6.8 km from the market town of Tlacolula de Matamoros. Its distance to the state capital, Oaxaca City, is approximately 39 km. The name of the town shows the legacy of Spanish colonisation and its indigenous background. Quialana means in the Zapotec language “black or smoked stone” and the prefix San Bartolomé⁹⁵ is related to the process of Christian evangelization that Spanish friars deployed in the region.

Quialana was founded around the sixteenth century when people from San Juan Teitipac (a neighbouring town) came to settle in the region. In 1614, the Spanish crown recognised the ownership of the land by the native dwellers and extended

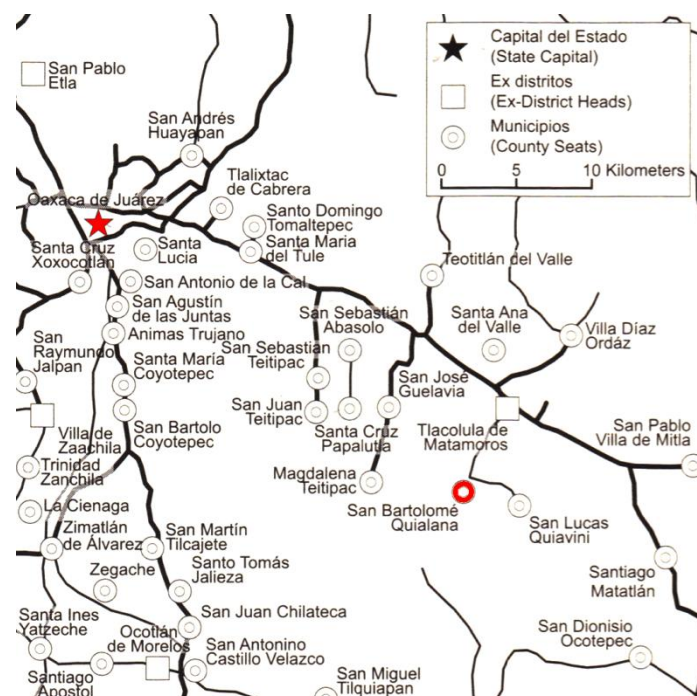
⁹⁴ The Central Valley region is located in the heart of the state of Oaxaca. The region includes the districts of Etla, Centro, Zaachila, Zimatlán, Ocotlán, Tlacolula and Ejutla.

⁹⁵ Saint Bartholomew in English

them land ownership titles. The original documentation still exists and is carefully kept in the government building.

Quialana is reached via the market town of Tlacolula. The streets in the town are not paved and everything seems to be covered by dust. The government building is located in the town centre and opposite this is the Catholic Church; in the same square the old primary school building is now used as a cultural centre where young children paint, dance and the town's band rehearses.

Map 3 San Bartolomé Quialana and its surroundings



Source: Modified from Stephen 2007, p.10

● San Bartolomé Quialana

★ Oaxaca's capital city

Down the street the auditorium, the library and the basketball court are located. The basketball court is a multi-use space where general assemblies, meetings and dances take place. Towards the end of the town the famous hill called *El Calvario* (the calvary) holds the ruins of a pyramid built by the ancient Zapotec culture.

Tuesday is market day and the main street in the first square (no more than 100 meters) is blocked for street vendors. The community has 58 small businesses, most of them corner shops and maize mills. In Quialana there is mobile phone reception and almost every household has a landline. Yet in contrast the town does not have a reliable water supply and the government is only just in the process of introducing a sewage system, so hardly any of the houses have flushing toilets.

Photo 4 Market day in San Bartolomé Quialana's main street



Photo taken by the author.

Quialana has 2,470 inhabitants, 1026 males and 1444 females (INEGI 2010), who belong to and identify themselves with the Zapotec ethnic group. While virtually all

Quialanense are bilingual (Spanish and Zapotec), communication at the social and political arena as well as for everyday activities is done in Zapotec⁹⁶.

According to CONAPO, the index of marginalization in Quialana is “very high” and this index has stayed the same for several decades. Like Cacaloxtotec, Quialana receives federal and state help through *Oportunidades*, Procampo, 70 y mas, *Escuelas de Calidad* (Quality Schools), *Aula abierta* (Open Classroom), Liconsa (economic corner shop) and state funding for several workshops⁹⁷. The town has a rural surgery established by the federal programme *Oportunidades*, which includes a dental practice.

The average years of completed education in the town is 4.4 per person, even lower than in Cacaloxtotec and well below the state average (6.9) and national average (8.6) (INEGI 2010). Quialana has two nurseries, three rural primary schools⁹⁸ and a distance learning (*telesecundaria*) secondary school which was founded no more than 20 years ago. To achieve further education Quialanense must commute to Tlacolula or to other urban areas. Unlike Cacaloxtotec, Quialana has a complete team of teachers and has greater resources, so almost every child in Quialana attends a local school⁹⁹.

⁹⁶ Indigenous men and women from Quialana state that they speak “dialect”. However, Zapotec (and Mixtec) have been recognised as distinct languages, so the fact that Quialanense (and Cacaleño) refer to their language as a “dialect” reflects self-denigration (Bartolomé 1997), which is also supported by the generally low status that indigenous culture and people have in Mexico.

⁹⁷ Workshops provided include: dancing, cooking, piñata making, sewing, among others.

⁹⁸ One of the nurseries and one of the primary schools provide education in Zapotec as well as in Spanish.

⁹⁹ In terms of infrastructure, the town also has its own local jail and grave yard as well as a Pentecostal Christian temple and a small hotel.

4.4.2 Political and organisational system

The town elects its representatives according to customary law (*usos y costumbres*), but the regime is not static and has been transformed in various important respects. Quialanense elect their representatives by raising their hand at a general assembly held the first Monday of October every three years, comprising all Quialana dwellers who wish to participate (participation is encouraged but not forced). Until summer 2010 all Quialana dwellers actually meant all such men, women being excluded from participation and voting. There was no written law prohibiting women's political participation but *custom* decreed that politics was for men only. Those who are not Quialana born are not excluded from the assembly, although the latter should have a strong link with the town (i.e. being married to someone from the community). Non-Catholics were for a while excluded from general assemblies but the acceptance and tolerance of "other religion's people" has increased and they are now included.

Quialana has a history of *tequio* and committees concerned with the well-being and development of the town but until around 2002¹⁰⁰ only men were allowed to participate. Most of the *tequio* activities¹⁰¹ are related to town maintenance and *tequio* givers do not expect to be paid; they do it to serve their community and to get onto the cargo-system ladder.

As in Cacaloxtepec, the committees in Quialana are the baseline for administration of the town. Committees should have a president, a treasurer and communicators who are chosen by the members of the committee. The president is responsible for maintaining a political relationship with the federal/state/municipal organisations

¹⁰⁰ Personal communication with the former municipal president Amador Pérez.

¹⁰¹ Although women do now participate in *tequio* activities, manual work or hard *tequio* work is performed by men only.

that run the institutions. Quialanense take turns on committee and serve for one year. Committee members are elected by public vote (raising hands) based on their relationship with the institution and they are not paid but earn prestige in exchange for their work¹⁰².

Photo 5 The newly created young people's committee in San Bartolomé Quialana



Photo taken by the author.

The *cargo*-system ladder in Quialana has undergone important transformations; some positions have been feminised while others are still exclusively men's arenas. The position of altar servers is an example of feminisation of the post. No more than ten years ago the altar server positions were filled only by young indigenous single

¹⁰² During the fieldwork, Quialana had the following committees: water supply, street lights, Catholic Church, health, primary school (one committee for each primary school), secondary school, nursery (one committee for each nursery), events and festivities, family development (DIF), communal land and the newly created young's people and motorised rickshaw committees.

men, however nowadays every single altar server is a woman. Most of the women who are altar servers are single, many of them are considered by the town standards “too old to get married or getting a bit old to get married” (the average age of the altar servers is 22), but there are some married women with grown up children serving. Indigenous women from Quialana have also participated in committees since 2002 and some of them have already been appointed committee presidents.

The family development committee (DIF) and the health committee are dominated by women, and two other committees have female leadership (one of the primary schools and one of the nurseries). Notwithstanding this increasing participation of indigenous women, they are delegated to “women’s issues”, which reinforces women’s association with reproductive work (Anker 2001). Women have limited presence on some committees (water supply, street lights) and none on others (events and festivities, communal land, motorised rickshaw). The Catholic Church committee deserves special attention because participation in the committee is through married couples. Husband and wife hold the cargo as a unity but the main holder is still the husband¹⁰³.

The position of *topiles* and bell ringer are carried out entirely by men. *Topiles* are those men who “watch” the municipal government door when people from the town come to discuss issues with the municipal president or an officer. *Topiles* keep the president and officers informed about who is outside waiting to talk with them. Regarding bell ringers, people in Quialana argue that due to the physical effort involved this position should only be occupied by men.

¹⁰³ When the committee meets it is men who enter into agreements and concordances while women prepare drinks (tejate) and nibbles (tortillas) for their husbands.

Although the *cargo* structure shown in Figure 5 is a set of linear positions, it does not mean that each post must be exercised in order to advance. Some Quialanense were never altar servers but perhaps gave enough *tequio* that they were made *topiles*. Or maybe a person was not part of the communal land committee but his/her general behaviour in the town has given him/her the opportunity to be chosen for an officer position. Being a *mayordomo*, as in Cacaloxtepec, is still one of the greatest positions in Quialana's cargo-system ladder. Normally a person can be a *mayordomo* only after accomplishing altar server, *topil*, bell ringer and membership of committee cargos.

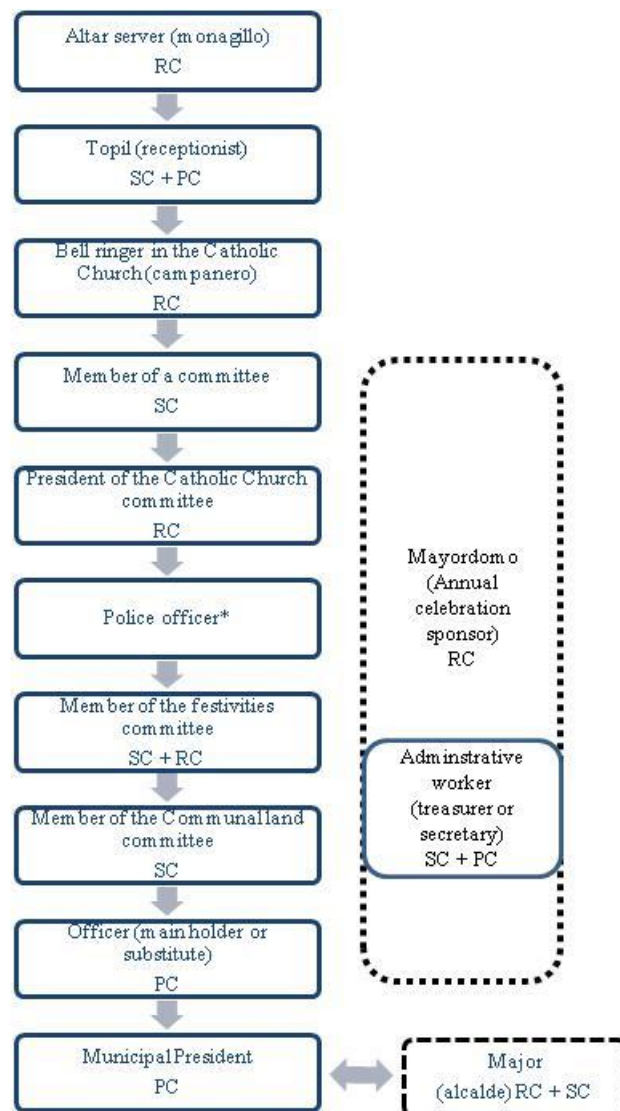
However in 2010 a woman who was living most of the time outside Quialana was accepted as annual celebration sponsor (*mayordoma*). The money she offered for the sponsorship of the annual celebration seemed to be more influential than the cargo-system ladder. People who are not originally from Quialana can progress so far up the cargo-system ladder but the positions of *mayordomo*, officers and municipal president are still banned to them. Non-Catholic people can also participate in the cargo-system as long as their faith is not compromised¹⁰⁴.

The position of police officer has recently been transformed. Until 2007 police officers were elected during the general assembly and did not receive a payment for their service. They would only work at night, did not have a specific uniform or guns, but would carry a so-called "authority stick"¹⁰⁵ to emphasize their capacity to rebuke wrongdoers or even put them in jail. Then the government of Amador Pérez (2008-2010) established a "western" style police body. Positions were open for all

¹⁰⁴ That means that non-Catholic people would not choose to be named altar server, bell ringer, *mayordomo* or festivity committee member.

¹⁰⁵ An authority stick is a wooden stick that symbolizes the power given from the municipal president to them, the police officers.

Figure 5 Cargo-system structure in San Bartolomé Quialana



Notes:

RC: Religious Cargo, SC: Social Cargo, PC: Political Cargo

*Police officers used to be considered social cargos but with the establishment of the Municipal Police force, police officers are still part of the cargo ladder but are seen more as employees.

Source: Fieldwork, author design

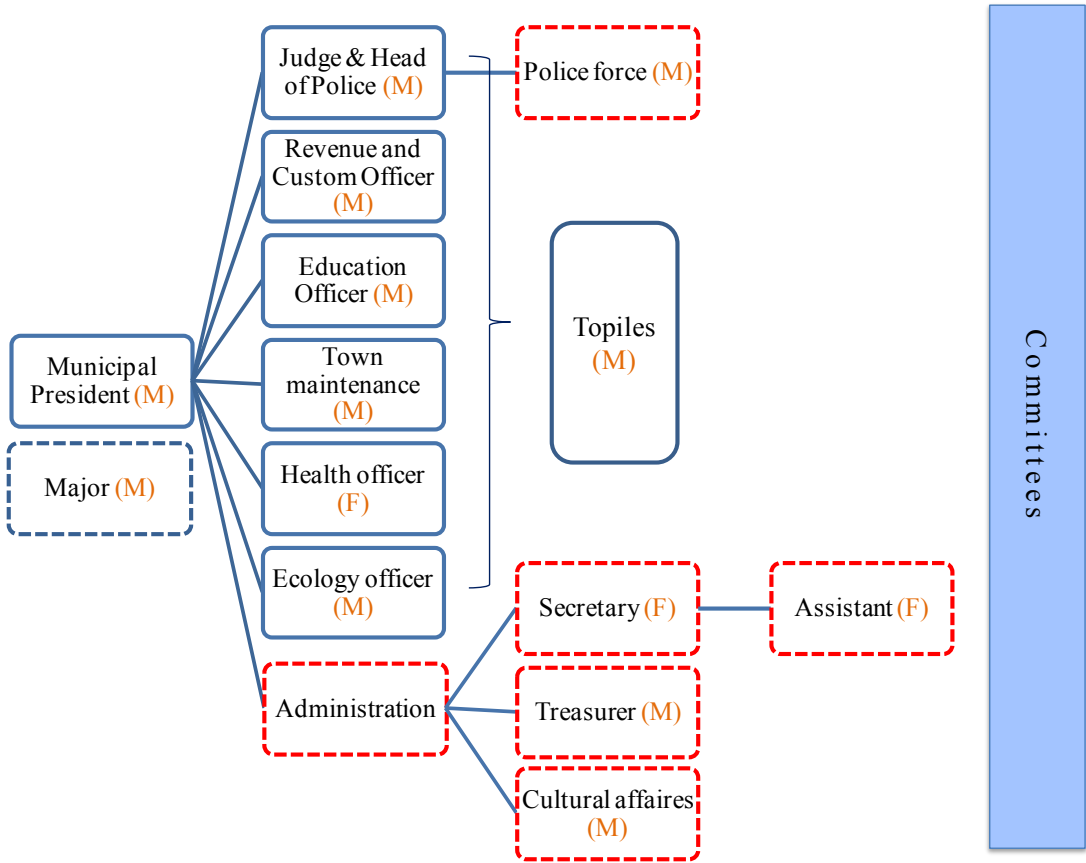
Quialana dwellers - including women - in general to apply for a career in the municipal police and with the support of the state government, candidates were selected and trained. Currently municipal police receive a monthly salary (3,000 Pesos, £150) and general benefits. The creation of this “western” style police body has caused dissent among Quialana inhabitants. Quialanense indigenous men who were police officers in the “traditional way” argue that the current police officers should not be paid because they are serving a *cargo* (see Chapter 7 for further discussion).

Officers, the municipal president and the mayor are positions that are part of the cargo-system ladder and part of the political structure of Quialana, recognised at state and federal level (see Figure 5). While social and religious cargos last one year, political cargos last for three years and, as in Cacaloxtepec, receive a small payment (*dieta*). As depicted in Figure 6, the political organisations easily intertwine with the cargo-system ladder of the town. All the political cargos, as well as the social and religious cargos, are chosen through the general assembly by public individual vote (showing of hands). To choose a *cargo* holder dwellers from Quialana take into consideration prestige, good conduct and honour. While education and work experience were not taken into account until a few years ago, these days those abilities and achievements have started to become important. In this government period (2011-2013) the ecology officer (former treasurer) holds a MA in public administration, the education officer is a retired primary school teacher and the health officer is a qualified nurse.

In contrast, the municipal president Faustino Gómez Hernández left his career as lead singer in a regional music band when he was elected to the post. Apart from the

ecology, education and health officers the rest of the current officers and their substitutes have been long term migrants in the US.

Figure 6 Political and Administrative organisation in San Bartolomé Quialana



Notes: Those in red dotted boxes are treated as employees and are not elected by the general assembly

(M) Male Officer, (F) Female Officer

Source: Fieldwork, author's design.

Some Quialana dwellers expressed that they did not want to fulfil a *cargo* but felt that they could not refuse anymore (having done so several times before) otherwise people would have started to ostracise them. Some government officers and committee presidents mentioned that they were accomplishing their cargo only because the general assembly chose them. For example, Faustino said “one does not decide, one does not do any campaign or one does not propose oneself for a *cargo*. The community speaks and we have to serve our community, there is no other option”.

Another important figure in the political and administrative organisation in Quialana is the mayor (*alcade*). The positions of municipal president and mayor are at the same level, the highest in the *cargo* ladder and very prestigious. It could be assumed that the municipal president is much more important than the mayor, but from Quialana’s perspective both positions have the same level of importance, one cannot exist without the other and they balance the political life of the community with its ceremonial one.

4.4.3 Ceremonial life

Ceremonial life in Quialana is deeply linked with the Catholic faith and is directed by the mayor, the *Mayordomo* and the Catholic Church committee. In Quialana there are no “saint-devotion groups” or *cofradías* and the main commemoration is the annual saint celebration on 24 August, when the town venerates Saint Bartholomew. Religious aspects of the annual celebration are organised by the Catholic Church committee and the other activities are organised by the annual festivity committee¹⁰⁶. The main figure of the celebration is the annual celebration-sponsor (*mayordomo*) who spends significantly on food, music, fireworks,

¹⁰⁶ Extra activities or attractions include bull fighting, a parade, rides, basketball tournaments and dances.

mementos and dances. In a sense, *mayordomos* exchange their money for prestige and respect and many of them go into debt to do so¹⁰⁷.

The annual celebration takes one week and starts with a parade called “*calenda*” performed by Quialanense girls and young women who walk around the town with heavy baskets full of flowers on their heads. After the parade, the *mayordomo*, along with the Catholic Church committee, dance on the Church patio. Everyone in the town is invited to watch this ceremony and everyone is invited to join them in the dancing. Giant puppets symbolizing a man and a woman from Quialana, fireworks, *mescal* and music accompany the celebration. The annual celebration is also a great opportunity for the government to collect money for future investment, and it is also a great opportunity for single Quialanense men and women to meet a potential partner/husband/wife, or simply to elope with their partners. It is also a great opportunity for families to reunify since many Quialanense men and women who live in the US and in other parts of Mexico come back for the annual celebration. Some of these migrants might come back to stay and some will go back to the US as soon as the celebration finishes.

The annual celebration in 2010 was the start of “bilateral relations” between the Quialana diaspora that lives in the US and the town itself. For the first time a delegation of Quialanense people from the US came representing their diasporic community to remind people that even if they are in physically different locations, Quialanense men and women in the US are “present” at the annual celebration¹⁰⁸. The US delegation was integrated by Miss Quialana US 2010 who wanted to be

¹⁰⁷ It has been calculated that a *mayordomo* can easily spend around 200,000 pesos (£10,000) on the celebration.

¹⁰⁸ Personal conversation with Pastor, US Quialana representative.

recognised as the representative of young Quialana people in the US. However the cabinet and the festivity committee decided not to recognise her as such because “the young woman could not even speak Spanish and even less Zapotec, how can she think we can recognise her in the town?” (Liborio).

Other small but important celebrations¹⁰⁹ in the town involve a level of religiosity and in all of these celebrations *guelaguetza*¹¹⁰, and *tequio* are central elements.

4.4.4 Traditions, customs and the family

In Quialana traditions and customs are very much embedded in the everyday life of the town. Most of these traditions have been kept for decades but others have been modified. Since the majority of the inhabitants are still Catholics, baptisms, confirmations and first communions are central requirements in order to belong to the community.

Such celebrations require days of preparation and organisation, mostly done by women (as mothers, wives, sisters, etc), while men’s role is to invite people and “enjoy” the celebration. Because of the lack of resources, many celebrations make use of *guelaguetza*. Godparents are central elements of the festivities; they pay for the special clothes and extra evening clothes¹¹¹. At the party food and alcohol cannot be served until the godfather ritual has taken place; whereby he blesses the bottle of alcohol and gives a small speech; as soon as this ritual is done then everyone can start enjoying the party.

¹⁰⁹ These include patriotic holidays (15-16 September), school graduations (summer), carnival (before Lent), Lent itself and the day of the death (2 November).

¹¹⁰ Guelaguetza is a formal system of reciprocity and cooperation (Stephen 1991) which creates networks and gives prestige in the community. Guelaguetza is mainly practiced during celebrations, for instance if a wedding is taking place in the community *compadres* and friends of the family are expected to help with the preparations or to donate material goods.

¹¹¹ In exchange, godparents receive a basket full of food plus some animals to take away.

Photo 6 The Godfather ritual in a baptism



Photo taken by the author.

A new celebration has been incorporated into the list for women, the fifteenth birthday party imported from urban Mexico at which the birthday girl wears a ball gown and is presented to society as “virtuous”.

The main family celebrations are weddings, which take place during the first three to four months of the year before the rainy season comes and agricultural work starts. Courting and physical contact between men and women are not acceptable in public¹¹², and weddings are seen as agreements among families more than romantic relationships. When a man wants to get married he chooses the woman he likes from the town and communicates this to his parents before actually letting the chosen

¹¹² Even among married couples, it is seen as immoral to kiss or hold hands in public places.

woman know that she has been picked from the crowd. The bachelor, accompanied by his parents, goes to talk with the chosen woman's parents about his intentions (still without her knowledge). The bachelor should bring with him a bottle of *mescal* and boxes of fruit and beer to start the agreement. If the father of the woman believes that the young man is a good prospect for his family and daughter then the bottle of *mescal* is opened as a sign of acceptance. Then the father will inform his daughter that she will soon get married to this man. Some bachelors are rejected by the father of the woman if he thinks that the man is poor or does not have an honourable family, in which case he will try again with a different candidate. As Lucia recounts:

I did not want to get married. I was 14 when my father asked me to wear a nice dress and then I knew that I had to get married. I cried a lot and I told my mum that I did not want to leave them but I did not have any choice.

Marriage in Quialana is most of the time endogamous and women and men get married young. In the past women were as young as 12 years old; nowadays the average age to get married is 18 years old and in some cases women have the possibility to give their opinion about the potential husband¹¹³. One year after the engagement takes place the couple celebrates their civil ceremony and a few months later the religious ceremony. Between the civil ceremony and the religious ceremony the wife does not live with her husband but goes everyday to his family house to cook and clean for him. According to Quialanense, the gap between the religious and the civil ceremony gives the couple the opportunity to know each other and to go out on dates without being judged by the community. Traditionally the wedding celebrations last a week and the entire family and the village gets involved.

¹¹³ More issues related with women's status in the town will be explored in Chapters 6 and 7.

Previously women would wear their everyday clothes¹¹⁴ to get married, however the influence of the “white princess dress” has also reached Quialana and nowadays most brides get married in white. After the wedding the wife moves to her parents in law’s house and is under supervision of her mother and sisters in law.

What is acceptable and not acceptable in Quialana society is very clear. During a talk for teenagers at the public surgery they were asked to list things that are not acceptable in the community and came up with the following:

Homosexuality, piercing, women are not allowed to smoke [only men can smoke], to get divorced, kisses in public, short skirts, women are not allowed to go out with married men, husbands abandoning wives, marriage among relatives, courting, women should not take the initiative in a relationship, single mothers, women are not allowed to run for municipal president, bastards, gangs, children outside marriage. (Field notes)

Engaging in any of these forbidden practices will bring dishonour to a family and prevent them enjoying full community acceptance.

De facto property rights in Quialana are still arranged to favour men more than women. Although women can inherit secondary property (land to cultivate or land outside the main town) from their parents, it is a tradition to leave the main property (house) or land to the youngest son in the family when both parents die.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has depicted the social context of people from Cacaloxtepec and Quialana, how political and ceremonial life is organised, as well as their traditions and customs. Although both communities identify themselves as indigenous towns, Cacaloxtepec follows a political party regime, whereas Quialana has chosen to be

¹¹⁴ The traditional dress in Quialana is exclusively worn by women. It consists of a cotton embroidered top that is used as underwear, a colourful top, and a piece of tweed-style fabric that is wrapped around the waist. Women cover their heads with a colourful scarf and braid their hair with colourful ribbons.

ruled under customary law (*usos y costumbres*). Notwithstanding the different government regimes both of them keep a strong link with ceremonial life that is very much based on Catholic faith-practices. In both communities, prestige, honour, age and experience are still very important among inhabitants, but currently academic achievement and economic position have become relevant. In both communities female inhabitants were, for a long time, not allowed to participate in public life. However, nowadays in Cacaloxtotec and Quialana organisational structures have undergone important changes which have led specific community activities to become women's domain.

Albeit culturally rich, both communities are struggling economically. Cacaloxtotec and Quialana have an economy based on small agricultural-farm production (animal breeding) and small handicraft production that has not provided them with greater socio-economic opportunities. Moreover, labour opportunities outside agriculture and handicrafts are scarce. These circumstances have very much influenced men's and women's decision to migrate and to find greater opportunities outside their town of origin. In the following chapter the migration experiences of indigenous people from both communities are further explored.

Chapter 5. Transnational migration in Santiago Cacaloxtotec and San Bartolomé Quialana: a gendered movement

5.1 Introduction

Arguing that gender should be taken as key to the organisation of migration, this chapter addresses the first research question and presents an historical overview and current patterns of migration in both indigenous communities. It also documents why Cacaleño and Quialanense migration is considered transnational; indigenous migrants have found ways to continue to participate in their communities of origin, through monetary contributions for development projects and saint-celebrations, and, more recently through the formation of hometown associations¹¹⁵ in the US and in their satellite communities around Mexico (Goldring 1998, Levitt 2001).

Although Cacaleño and Quialanense have mainly migrated due to economic constraints, this chapter documents the “culture of migration” (Cohen 2004) that has emerged in both communities, making the process of migration a rite of passage for men and women. It also brings to the fore the fact that although in Cacaloxtotec as well as in Quialana some women have migrated, men are still assumed to be the main subjects of migration, especially when the movement takes them across borders. Finally, this chapter provides a new take on the claims of Cohen *et al.* (2009) and Kearney (2004), that social ties are critical to successful migration, job creation and a sense of belonging and shared identity. Despite migration of Cacaleño to urban Mexico being a mature migrant circuit, Cacaleño have not established social ties based on a shared identity. Furthermore, in contrast to previous studies

¹¹⁵Hometown association are defined as institution that contribute to the development and self-determination of migrant and non-migrant communities, as well as struggle for the defence of the human rights with justice and gender equity at the binational level. One of the most representative Mexican indigenous Hometown associations in the United States is Binational Front of Indigenous Organisation (FIOB). FIOB is a community based organization and a coalition of indigenous organizations, communities, and individuals settled in Oaxaca, Baja California and in the State of California in the United States. This organization was founded on October 5, 1991 in Los Angeles, California.

(see París 2008, Stephen 2008, Velasco Ortiz 2005), it is shown that Mixtec from Cacaloxtotec who migrate to the US do not work in the agricultural but in the service sector.

5.2 Vintages and patterns of Cacaleño and Quialanense migration

5.2.1 Cacaleño migration routes: historical overview

In Santiago Cacaloxtotec a lack of resources and labour opportunities, as well as the already well established relative migrant networks, encourage Cacaleño men to migrate. For Cacaleño, migration has been entrenched in their lives since the foundation of the town itself. Indigenous men and women from Cacaloxtotec have a long history of migration to urban and rural areas. The door to migrate was opened when the road (motorway Mexico 190) that connects Cacaloxtotec with Huajuap de León was built in the 1970s (Plan Municipal de Desarrollo 2008-2010). Agriculture has never been central to Cacaloxtotec due to the dry terrain where the town is located and as a consequence the lack of agricultural skills resulted in few Cacaleño joining the Bracero Programme. There are no accurate records that might tell us how many people from Cacaloxtotec actually worked under the Bracero Programme, but according to field-work interviews some Cacaleño men participated.

Historically the main occupation for women and men from Cacaloxtotec was the production of straw hats, bags and baskets. Every family and every member of the family - from children to adults - used to weave hats and other articles to sell on to local retailers. Although there are a few families still weaving hats and bags, this activity largely disappeared with the establishment of the hat factory-cooperative *Impulsora del Sombrero Mixteco* in 1962. The automation of hat production, competition from Puebla producers, and the introduction of cheaper plastic hats and

bags took Cacaleño out of the market (Impulso de Oaxaca 2010). Bertha gives an overview of the way in which artisanal production has been replaced by migration within Mexico and petty trading of other items:

E: Why is the market so empty?

B: Well, because everyone has gone. They moved to Mexico [Mexico City]. There, they can find a job. They do not weave hats anymore.

E: But I still see people making hats.

B: Oh, but very few people. Before everyone would weave [...]. Nowadays they [Cacaleño] sell candies, seeds, biscuits, just like that. They wander around with their baskets. And men are shoe-cleaners. Almost everyone here is a shoe-cleaner. I have heard that shoe-cleaners earn at least 200 Pesos (£10) [per day].

In the late 1970s many Oaxacans moved to north-west Mexico to work in the booming industrial agricultural sector (Velasco Ortiz 2005), and entire families from Cacaloxtpec were part of this migration. Having developed the necessary skills to produce tomatoes in greenhouses this knowledge was then taken back to Cacaloxtpec, where two small greenhouses produce tomatoes for local sale.

The migration of men and women from Cacaloxtpec to urban areas of Mexico (Huajuapán de León, Oaxaca City, Puebla, Morelos, Mexico City and its outskirts), also started in the 1970s and continues today. As Martha recounts, migration from Cacaloxtpec was facilitated by the social capital of pioneer migrants:

There are people who went to knock at my grandmother's door in Huajuapán. Because previously people did not migrate, did not move. They just lived here. So people started to go to Huajuapán. The first people who emigrated went to Huajuapán and I remember that my grandmother rented them [migrants] rooms.

Currently the biggest diaspora of Cacaleño is located on the outskirts of Mexico City (Ciudad Nezahualcoyotl, Chimalhuacán, Chalco and Ecatepec), where most of the

population lives and works in the service industry. Although some Cacaleño have managed to work their way into better paying jobs, Cacaleño women tend to work as maids, nannies, cooks and street vendors, whereas Cacaleño men tend to work as shoe-cleaners and street vendors.

Migration outside the Mexican territory is relatively new for men and women from Cacaloxtotec. To date there are no more than 60 Cacaleño in the US and five in Quebec and Montreal, Canada. Whereas internal migration has included women, only three women have joined Cacaleño international migration.

López and Rusten (2004), París (2008) and Velasco Ortiz (2005) have carried out extensive research on Mixtec migration to the US and all of them have found that the great majority of Mixtec migrants are employed in the US agricultural sector on an undocumented basis. Cacaleño who have migrated to Canada follow in this pattern, but this kind of migration is done under seasonal agriculture contracts. However those who have migrated to the US, while still undocumented workers, are concentrated in the service industry.

The five Cacaleño men who migrate every year to Canada state that going to Canada is safer than going to the US “[b]ecause it is more serious. You go directly to work and there is no real risk. One has a safer job” (Raúl). On the other hand, Cacaleño in the US are sparsely distributed in California, Oregon, Utah, Florida, New York, and Virginia.

The profile of the Cacaleño migrant has undergone some modifications. In the 1970s migration from Cacaloxtotec to urban areas in Mexico was by married men or by entire families, a pattern that continued until the end of the 1980s. In the 1990s more single men and women started to migrate, mainly to work but also for education.

Map 4 Vintage and Patterns of Migration from Santiago Cacaloxtotec



Source: Author's design

- Migration within the state of Oaxaca
- Migration to other parts of Mexico
- Migration to the US
- Migration to Canada

Currently, Cacaleño men and women who migrate within the country do it at all ages; from children to elderly people. In contrast, migration to the US and Canada is still dominated by married men in their middle 20s (to the US) and in their late 30s (to Canada).

5.2.2 Quialanense migration routes: historical overview

The notion of migration is not new for people from Quialana. There is a long tradition of religious pilgrimages, taking Quialanense to Guatemala to pay respect to the Christ of Esquipulas, a four month trip by foot or donkey (Koch 1989 cited in

Hulshof 1991). Today the pilgrimage still takes place, although it is less popular and modern pilgrims use public transport. Labour migration from Quialana started at the beginning of the twentieth century with the sale of firewood and charcoal, and tomatoes in Oaxaca City's main market¹¹⁶. However, the construction of the *Panamericana* motorway, the entrance of competitors, and the over exploitation of natural resources lowered the prices and the profit margins, taking Quialanense out of the market.

In the 1930s men and women from Quialana found an important supply of work in Tapachula Chiapas harvesting cotton, coffee and sugar cane. From December to March, entire families would travel to Chiapas to work in the *fincas* (farms). Most of the families came back after the season but some settled there¹¹⁷. Around the 1960s the labour migration to Tapachula was not attractive anymore due to low salaries and was replaced by migration to the industrial agricultural areas in the north of Mexico, which later created a stepping stone for migrating to the US (Hulshof 1991).

Koch in her M.A. thesis (1989) reported the migratory movements of Quialana up to the 1980s period. She noted that in the 1960s men and women, but especially men, migrated to Sinaloa, Sonora and Veracruz. In the 1970s and 1980s migration of women from Quialana was reported, to work mainly as cleaners for upper middle class and upper class families in Tlacolula, Oaxaca City and Mexico City. Beyond Mexico around 20 men from Quialana got involved in the Bracero Programme to work in the tomato fields of Stockton and Salinas in California (Koch 1989, p. 26-

¹¹⁶ The journey to Oaxaca City was done weekly by donkey and took 12 hours.

¹¹⁷ Several men and women from Quialana in their 40s and 50s were born in Chiapas and/or worked there during their childhood.

27). From the 1970s male migration to the US was on an undocumented basis, mainly to work in Californian agriculture.

In the 1980s Quialanense migrants to the US began to move into the service industry (Hulshof 1991), men and women from Quialana settled down in the cities of Los Angeles, Santa Ana and Santa Monica and started working in the restaurant sector. To date “working in a restaurant” in Greater Los Angeles is still one of the most common jobs for Quialanense migrants, together with working as a gardener, mainly in the city of Anaheim. These transitions in terms of destination and employment reflect the growth of the service sector in US urban centres in the late 20th century (López and Rusten 2004, París 2008).

The age and civil status profile of indigenous migrants from Quialana has also changed. Koch (1989) mentions that until 1980 the great majority of migrants were married and around 20 to 30 years old; over the last 20 years migrants have become younger (13 to 16 years old at first migration, some still in primary school), and are single.

Moreover, Quialanense migrants are no longer migrating “in phases” as in the 1960s (first to border states in Mexico and then to the US); nowadays for many Quialanense their first migratory experience is directly to the US: “I came to the US when I was 14 years old. I never went out [to other places]; I only went to Tlacolula, San Marcos and San Lucas [neighbouring towns]. I think I only went three times to Oaxaca City, and then I came to the US” (Rey). Like Rey, many Quialanenses have never visited the capital city of their state, let alone Mexico’s capital city. Mexican border cities (i.e. Tijuana) and the US are for many Quialanense their first time outside their community.

Map 5 Vintage and Patterns of Migration from San Bartolomé Quialana



Source: Author's design

- Migration within the state of Oaxaca
- Migration to other parts of Mexico
- Migration to the US

It can be concluded that lack of employment opportunities in their communities of origin, combined with opportunities in the US and the income disparity between Mexico and the US, have fuelled migration (Durand 2004). Cacaleño and Quialanense recognise that in the US they can earn up to three times more than in Mexico: “The money I earn in one day in the US I will earn in Mexico in two weeks” (Cesar); “I came here [US] because I want to be rich. I wanted to build a house for my mum, I hate poverty” (Rafael).

Sometimes a particular migration is stimulated by a specific need for money, to build a house, educate children or sponsor a social event (Cohen 2001), in this case weddings, christenings, fifteen year birthdays, etc. At the same time and as in many other communities in Mexico in the last decade male migration within Mexico and to the US has been assumed, creating what Cohen (2004) calls a “culture of migration”. At some point in their lives Quialanense and Caceleño men are expected to work outside their communities because having a migration experience is a step towards manhood (Rosas 2007). In fact, to migrate means doing what other men in the town are doing: to fulfil a public commitment¹¹⁸. As Arturo states: “I came here [US] because of the adventure and because all of us [men] do it. I wanted to see with my own eyes how much money I could actually earn in the US”.

5.3 Current patterns of migration

“I was not afraid to cross the border [Mexico-US border]. We are ready for that. In the town [Quialana] we are psychologically prepared for that” (Rey).

5.3.1 Crossing the border: the cost/investment of migrating

Economic theories of migration argue that the poorest members of a community are less likely to migrate (Castles and Miller 2003, p. 22-25) due to their inability to fund the costs of migration. However in Cacaloxtepec and Quialana a lack of economic resources to pay the travel expenses and the *coyote* (smuggler) fees to cross the Mexico-US border is not seen as an obstacle or impediment to migration. In Cacaloxtepec, Quialana and the US there is an established network of “sponsors” who lend money to be repaid as soon as the migrants start working and earning.

¹¹⁸ This is further developed in section 5.4 and in chapter 7.

- **Santiago Cacaloxtotec**

Men and women from Cacaloxtotec hire the services of a *coyote* (smuggler) to cross the Mexico-US border. In Cacaloxtotec there are no local *coyotes*, thus Cacaleño contact *coyotes* from neighbouring San Pedro Yuduyuxi and Huajuapán de León, or directly in the border towns. The price of crossing the border depends on the kind of risk and danger that one opts for. The most expensive and least risky method is *por la línea* (through the border customs) in a border town (e.g. Tijuana or Ciudad Juárez). There are two ways of crossing *por la línea*. The first is when the potential migrant hides in an undercover area within a car or van and hopes not to be found during inspections by customs officials. The second option is when the potential migrant shows fake US documents (birth certificate mainly or driving license) to cross the border. This “safer” way of crossing the border costs approximately 6,000 USD and it is mainly used for women, teenagers and children.

The second option is to cross the border through *el cerro* (the mountains). This option involves weeks of walking through the mountains of the states of Baja California and Sonora. Most potential Cacaleño migrants travel to border towns via Mexico City by coach and, according to the fieldwork, Cacaleño tend to cross the Mexico-US border by the riskier and less expensive method. Currently this option costs around 2,000 to 5,000 USD. I only met one Cacaleño man who states that he did not *suffer* “because my brother in law who lives in Oregon lent me 5, 000 USD and I managed to cross hidden in the boot of a car in Tijuana” (Mateo). Raimundo, for example, crossed the border through the mountains and used the service of a *coyote* not only to cross the border but also to get a job. The *coyote* offered

Raimundo a “package” which involved the cost of crossing the border plus temporary accommodation and a job¹¹⁹ in the area of Manteca, California.

In Cacaloxtotec the way to obtain the money to cover the cost/investment of migration to the US is through high interest loans from two main sources: a Cacaleño family and savings fund companies. The Cacaleño loaners are a family of teachers who also have relatives in the US. In Cacaloxtotec people recognise that the interest rates are very high but in some situations there is no other alternative way to obtain money¹²⁰. The second option is through a saving fund company (e.g. *Caja Mexicana del Ahorro*). These saving funds companies charge less interest than the Cacaleño family but the loans are much more difficult to obtain since a source of income has to be proven.

In contrast, the picture for the Cacaleño men who migrate to Canada is very different. These migrant workers go with regular employment contracts which include travel expenses and immigration fees. The logistics of their travel, accommodation and work contract are managed under Canada’s Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (CSAWP) and the Mexican Government (Becerril Quintana, nd), but the travel expenses are later deducted from the workers’ salaries¹²¹.

These Cacaleño men recognise that they are in a privileged position that allows them to be away from their family for a short period of time and come back every year.

¹¹⁹ Smugglers also work as subcontractors, they know employers who need ‘cheap labour’ and that is how the migrant gets a job as soon as the migrant arrives in the US.

¹²⁰ For instance if the loan is for 20,000 pesos, the interest will be 10,000 pesos or even more if the borrower does not pay on time. In this way the potential migrant would pay twice the amount of money s/he originally borrowed.

¹²¹ According to the interview with Raúl and Tomas the cost of the flight discounted is around 550 Canadian Dollars.

They believe that those who are in the US tend to stay longer and in more uncertain conditions because they need to recover the money they invested in crossing the border and paying the fees to the smuggler.

Cacaleño main destination within Mexico has been either Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl (aka Neza) or Ecatepec, both working class areas established by rural Mexicans on the outskirts of Mexico City (Prieur 2008, p. 26). “Almost all Cacaloxtotec is there, one can even speak Mixtec”, mentioned a Cacaleño. In Neza and Ecatepec everyone is or was a migrant, so the presence and arrival of newcomers is part of life. Without diminishing the difficulties that Cacaleño are confronted with for being indigenous, Oaxacans and migrants (Bartolomé 2008, Oehmichen Bazán 2005), Cacaleño migrating to these urban centres are relatively secure, since they remain in their country and, thus, do not live under the threat of being deported. Cacaleño migrating within Mexico also have the opportunity to travel back to their communities on a regular basis, at least once a year during the town festivity in July. The cost/investment of migration within the Mexican territory is much more affordable, transport cost of 150 to 270 Pesos (£10).

- **San Bartolomé Quialana**

In Quialana an overwhelming majority of men migrate at a young age. Many of the boys only wait to finish secondary school before joining their relatives in the US. The great majority of the young men arrive directly to work and few of them enroll in an English as a Second Language (ESL) course or in the high school. In those cases of entire family migration, toddlers and children take part in the process of movement. Once in the US, mainly California, children are enrolled in the US public

school system, where they learn English and over time facilitate their family's integration in US society.

As well as Cacaleño, almost all Quialanense men and women migrants cross the Mexico-US border undocumented and hire the services of a *coyote*¹²². Those who wish to migrate will only pay the *coyote* fees if they actually cross the border without being caught by the border patrol. Crossing *por la línea* is the most popular method among Quialanense women, children and teenagers and crossing by *el cerro* is the most popular option among Quialanense men, who also take this venture as an opportunity to display their masculinity (see Chapter 7). Smugglers' fees to cross the border have steadily increased over the time as Julian recounts:

I have crossed the border four times. The first time I crossed I paid 800 USD, the second time 1,500 USD, the third time 2,000 USD, and the fourth time 2,500 USD. If I go back in the next year I am expecting to pay up to 5,000 USD.

In both cases potential migrants fly to bordering towns (but mainly Tijuana) from Oaxaca City airport, then the *coyote* will set them up in a specific hotel and some days after (it could be even weeks) the *coyote* will call them to try to cross¹²³. Quialanense men and women recall that it is normal to make at least three attempts before crossing the border; only the lucky ones cross successfully first time. If they are caught in their attempt and deported back to Mexico, they will quickly try again: "I have been caught eight times by the border patrol and some officers even recognise me [smile]. They even used to tell me 'Do not worry *amigo*, try again. Maybe tomorrow you will be in Los Angeles'" (Epigmenio).

¹²² In Quialana there are two well known *coyotes* who offer their services to Quialanense and to people from other neighbouring towns.

¹²³ Cost of /investment in migration: flight from Oaxaca City to Tijuana: £200; Smugglers fees (including accommodation in the border town and in the US and guidance during the route and transportation) between £3,000 to 5,000.

To pay the cost of/investment in migration, Quialanense make use of the already developed network of Quialanense people living in the US who are willing to loan money and then claim it back as soon as the migrant finds a job. If the migration is due to family reunification, the head of the family (mostly male) will obtain the money to pay the cost/investment of bringing his/her relatives to the US, but to pay back, all of those members of the family able to work will join efforts to clear the debt.

5.3.2 In constant motion

In Quialana everyday someone is migrating or planning to migrate. The community is constantly in motion. Due to the cost and the dangers of crossing the Mexico-US border, plus the fact that the majority of migrants are men, indigenous men travel back more often than women. Being undocumented is a very important variable in the coming back process. Many men and women from Quialana can take more than ten years to come back to their communities of origin, and in some cases Quialanense may never come back. Others return involuntarily, subjects of deportation or expulsion by the US government. During the fieldwork I only met or heard about male deportees, never female. When I asked why I was generally told that women were more careful while in the US and avoided getting into trouble.

Return visits are to see relatives, particularly if they are ill; supervise investments (building a house, land or the establishment of a business); attend community events; and for young men to find a suitable wife¹²⁴ as Rodrigo and Ismael recounts:

One day I came back to the town in August for the annual celebration. I used to drink a lot and I went out with my friends. And in the rides I saw Cecilia and I liked her. I started talking to her and later on we eloped. (Rodrigo)

¹²⁴ If a man or woman from Quialana can afford to come back they do it during August when the annual celebration takes place. For those Quialanense who have regularised their migratory status in the US, August is also the perfect month to come back and visit their relatives.

[I returned to Mexico] because I had a problem at home, well it was really bad. My son got very ill and I had to come back urgently. [...] He got very ill and there was no other option but coming back. [...] Everything was going on well in the US for me, I had a job, money, a 2005 model car, an Explorer Ford. [...] I was planning on driving back with my car but all of this happened and I came back. My son died a few days later. (Ismael)

Constant movement is also a feature in Cacaloxtpec. Many Cacaleño women and men travel everyday to work or study in Huajuapán de León and those who work as shoe-cleaners outside the senate offices in Mexico City come back every month to visit their relatives. Many Cacaleño already settled in other parts of Mexico come back to their town during the Saint Patron annual celebration and also when they have to fulfil a duty within their own *cofradías*. Another interesting process of coming back to Santiago Cacaloxtpec occurs among elderly women and men (aged 70 plus) who were born in Cacaloxtpec but migrated within Mexico; they return every three months to receive their government benefit payment from the programme *70 y mas*. After they receive their payment they spend some hours in the town, take a shot of *mescal* and soon after return to the outskirts of Mexico City, where they live¹²⁵.

5.4 A gendered movement

Although at a national level Mexico-US migration - documented or undocumented - is made up of almost equal levels of men and women (see Durand 2004), in the specific cases of Cacaloxtpec and Quialana such migration is still male dominated. In both communities, being a man implies privileges but at the same time responsibilities. Men are understood to be the main breadwinners, the head of the family and the one who interacts in the public space. These privileges and responsibilities set them at the front of the migratory process.

¹²⁵ I found out that many elderly people from Cacaloxtpec who receive the government benefit work as beggars in markets or churches in the Mexican capital.

In Quialana, around thirty years ago, it was a tradition for a family to send their sons to work as *mozitos* (servants) for families in Tlacolula and Oaxaca City. Male children were sent as young as seven years old to be servants, cleaners, and couriers for a host family. In exchange *mozitos* would receive accommodation, food, and the possibility to learn and practice Spanish. Pastor, a current documented and settled migrant in Greater Los Angeles, was a *mozito* and he remembers his experience as a negative one.

I hate the word “*mozito*”. Poor father, he sent me to work there [Tlacolula] because he wanted me to learn Spanish and see the outside world. But it was horrible for me there. I was sleeping in the stables with the animals, and every so often the family would give me some food. Just because of the Spanish!

Pastor, like many other men in Quialana, was assumed to be the one who sooner or later would be a family head and would interact with the ‘outside-work’ (i.e. the *mestizo* world), thus he needed to learn the basic skills of that world, including the language. With the arrival of the public school and easier access to the ‘outside world’, the tradition of being a *mozito* has ended.

In contrast, women thirty years ago were not even allowed to visit the market city of Tlacolula, let alone be outside home and learn Spanish. They were assumed to fulfil the role of house makers: “Ummm *Ma* [young woman] when I was young I did not even go to Tlacolula. Only at home working and looking after my little brothers and sisters” (Teresa).

While indigenous women did join the migratory movements within Mexico, to Chiapas and later on to urban areas to work as maids or helpers, when it came to international migration they were the ones who stayed at home. Later some of them

might be called to join their husbands, parents or children in the US, but in most cases they did not migrate alone.

Soon after the birth of Natalia's first child, Isidoro her husband migrated to the US. One year later, Natalia and her one year old daughter were called by Isidoro to meet him in the US. Natalia migrated to the US with her brother and her daughter clandestinely with the help of a smuggler. The little girl crossed the border *por la línea* in a car with US citizens and the next day she met her father in Anaheim. After being kidnapped by the smugglers and walking for approximately ten days, Natalia and her brother arrived at a refuge close to the Mexico-US border to plan their next attempt. Natalia arrived in Anaheim to be reunited with her husband and daughter in a place where many Quialanense migrants live:

“It was very dirty; it is like in San Bartolomé [Quialana]. Everyone speaks Zapotec and I asked my husband is this the US? For that did I suffer as much as I did crossing the border? One could clearly see that we were all Mexicans, it was very dirty, the rubbish on the street”.

Dorotea, a single mother, is the exception to the rule. During my first period of fieldwork in Quialana (August 2010) I met Dorotea and her son and a few months later I met her again in Los Angeles. When she saw me she hugged me and started crying: “I cannot believe you are here. You see, at the end I came and I am already working as a cleaner. I live with my brother and Alex [her son] is doing very well at school”. Although Dorotea migrated on her own initiative, she did it with the help of her brother who also offers her accommodation and “the protection of a male figure”. Dorotea's case shows that indigenous female migrants still need to be ‘endorsed’ by a male migrant in order to avoid misjudgement or stigma from their community.

According to my fieldwork, in the US there are only approximately 1,000 Quialanense (13 single mothers, 128 married couples with children, 158 single men and 125 married men with family in the community of origin)¹²⁶. Note that the overwhelming number of women and children in families who now live in the US were previously left-behind in Quialana, and later on reunited with their husband/father. The gender structure (Connell 2009) established in Quialana defines migrating to the US as a masculinised process that reinforces men's role as the courageous breadwinner who dares to move to distant places (see more about masculinity in chapter 7). The same gender structure, then, appoints women to household and care activities. As Pedro, a returnee points out: "Here [in Quialana] women make tortillas and *tejate*. Women do not go to school in Quialana. But just here in Tlacolula and Oaxaca women go to school". The description given by Pedro highlights a sexual division of labour that assigns different activities to men and women from childhood onwards.

The gender structure of Quialana makes migration to the US a male act and a culture of migration (Cohen 2004) has developed through social-remittances (Levitt 2001) that are brought by returnees: "There was no money to continue with my studies and also I used to see all the blokes who as soon as they finished primary school pum pum to *el Norte* [US], and of course I wanted to go like them" (Cesar).

In Cacaloxtotec, after the decline of the palm-straw hat weaving industry and the construction of the road that connects the town with Huajuapán de León, entire families migrated to different areas within Mexico seeking better incomes and opportunities. For instance, Valentina in my host family, the Lopez', went to work

¹²⁶ These numbers were obtained with the help of the hometown association *Amigos del Universo* and only include men and women from Quialana who registered in the community census carried out by Fidel Gómez. Children and people younger than 15 years old were not included in the census.

as a cook's assistant in Matamoros, Puebla while she was single and while working there she met Casimiro (her current husband). Together, they went back to Cacaloxtotec to get married and after a while and with five children they moved again to Mexico City where the entire family worked: Casimiro as a shoe cleaner, Valentina as a cook's assistant and the children as street vendors in Mexico City's main market (*central de abastos*). Later on all of them went back to Santiago Cacaloxtotec where Valentina and Casimiro live today. However all of their children have been on the move; all daughters have migrated to the outskirts of Mexico City and worked as cleaners or cooks at various points in their life and their only son migrated to Oregon, US, to work in the wood industry. While men may migrate within Mexico as single or married, solo migration by women, as in Valentina's case, is only when they are single. Married women moving without their husbands would be seen as unrespectable.

Migration of Cacaleño to the US is mainly performed by men. Out of the approximately 60 Cacaleño outside Mexico, only three are women¹²⁷. Cacaleño in the US are adults aged between 25 to 45 years old, most of them are married and on average they have six years of primary school education.

Tania, a daughter in the Lopez family, is Raimundo's partner. Raimundo currently lives in Stockton, California with his two brothers and works as a street vendor. While I was living with Tania she mentioned several times that she wanted to join her husband in the US, so they could both work hard, save more money and come back to Cacaloxtotec to pay their debts quicker. Tania would be happy to leave her daughters under the care of her mother and she is not concerned about the risk that

¹²⁷ One was until June 2011 with her husband in Utah, the second one is a single woman who works in a pizza restaurant in Virginia, and the third one is a single mother who works as a cook in Florida.

she might face crossing the border without documents. There is only one obstacle in Tania's wishes to migrate, her husband. Raimundo believes that Tania wants to migrate because she does not really know the dangers of the border and in the US. Raimundo also argues that if Tania joins him they would have more expenses to cover: "I do not understand how come and why she wants to come. Is she not a bad mother? She does not mind leaving our daughters. I just don't understand" (Raimundo).

As we can see in Raimundo's statement, when a married woman expresses her wish to migrate, especially to the US, she is seen as a bad mother, daughter and wife; whereas the husband who migrates is seen as responsible man and a good father ready to face danger for his family.

Migration of Cacaleño to Canada is exclusively male and women are excluded for two main reasons. The first is the preference of the Canadian employers to hire men (see Schwenken 2008), along with the difficult procedure established by the Mexican government to qualify for seasonal agricultural work in Canada. The second is the difficulty that Cacaleño, men and women, have in proving wide experience in agricultural labour. Let us not forget that Cacaleño specialized in straw weaving. Most Cacaleño migrants to Canada are married¹²⁸ and have children, and their families stay in the community.

5.4.1 The decision to migrate: A family strategy?

This thesis has argued so far that currently in both communities migration happens out of economic necessity but also as a rite of passage. But how is the decision to migrate taken?

¹²⁸ The Mexican-Canadian agreement does not require men to be married but requires wide experience in agriculture, so when men are able to prove experience most of them are also married.

In Quialana there is no such structured decision-making-process on migration matters. To migrate is expected and assumed for men. I remember having a conversation with a 17 year old woman who just got married and whose husband was already in the US working. I asked her about the process of him deciding to migrate and whether she felt disappointed at being left under the supervision of her in laws. She answered:

I do not know why you are so surprised or puzzled about the fact that we are [women] here living alone and our husbands in *El Norte*. This is normal for us! Everyone does it. Very few men migrate with their entire families, so those who stay here know that in three or four years they will not see their husbands. (Patricia)

Women play a part in raising boys who will grow up to see migration as normal. Since men are born they are seen as an investment that should be nurtured and looked after. It is well accepted that mothers treat male children better than female children because when these boys grow up they will send money from the US and support their elderly parents. Boys receive bigger food portions, more presents, have more freedom and in summary are preferred as children. As teenagers, many men *los mandan traer* (are “asked to go”) to the US by another relative, so the “when” is decided by other relatives (mainly parents but also grandparents, brothers and even sisters). In some cases mothers start to get worried even when their sons are toddlers about the increased risk in crossing the Mexico-US border, fearing that they might not have the same chances to cross as their parents: “because now people see that is very difficult to cross the border. It is not like years ago. Can you imagine what would happen with my two sons? They might not have any chances to go!” (Paulina).

As previously discussed, very few Quialenenses women take the decision to migrate on their own initiative. Most women have spent some of their life ‘left-behind’ as mothers, sisters, daughters and wives. Women who have migrated have done so because their relatives (mainly males) “ask them” to join them. It is a different story for those Quialanense women who migrate within Mexican territory. Many of these female local movements are assumed or expected; most women should either become a street vendor in the market or a cleaner in an upper class family. It is a custom for female teenagers (12 to 18 years old) to travel for work in the Tlacolula market as dishwashers: “Typically like every single young woman, I started washing up dishes when I was 12 in Tlacolula” (Rosa). Thus, in Quialana it is interesting to point out that migration is a rite of passage for men and women, but men are expected to migrate abroad and women within Mexico.

In contrast, I observed that in Cacaloxtepic the decision to migrate tends to be a family one. I remember sitting during breakfast on the patio of one Cacaleño family when they started to talk about the possibility of going to the US. Male and female members of the family who decided to stay behind or “rationalised” that they should remain in the community (due to their age or lack of skills) were happy to look after the goods of those who would migrate and/or look after their children. Women, like Gabriela, also play an important role in encouraging their husbands or partners to migrate, mainly based on economic grounds:

We do not have anything and with jobs in Huajuapán [Huajuapán de León] we can only get the basic stuff to survive, but if one wants to build a house, to give education to my children, one should sacrifice and that is why I told my husband to go to *El Norte* [US]. I know it is going to be difficult for a while but I will wait for him and when he comes back we could have something better, at least a house.” (Gabriela).

The few Cacaleño women who have joined the migration stream to the US or are at the moment working in the US present a different pattern in the decision making process. Rosaura after many trials decided to leave her husband: “I dumped him”, she said. Suddenly Rosaura found herself in a difficult economic situation with three children to support on her own. She decided to go to Florida and work in the orange fields and then the service sector. Rosaura left her children in her mother’s charge and worked in the US for almost a decade. With the money she earned and saved, she managed to build a house and currently is the owner of the pharmacy and a gift shop in the town. What Rosaura’s and Gabriela’s examples show is the fact that migration is a strategy through which to accumulate money to invest back in the community of origin, with an anticipated return.

Besides being a definite decision, migration can also be an outcome. In Cacaloxtepec, there is an expectation for men (either single or married) to migrate at some point, and that point comes at a certain age, when an opportunity arises, another relative calls for them, etc. However for women, especially when single, who migrates is more about circumstances than an ‘expectation’, as in Erika’s case. Erika is a single mother who was working as a cook in a Mexican upper middle class family in Mexico City when her boss informed them that they would be moving to Miami. Because of her work, Erika was asked to go with her employer - the family - to the US and work for them there. After having a word with her parents, Erika decided to leave her daughter in her mother’s charge and went to the US.

5.5 Transnational ties

The anthropologist Michael Kearney (1988) defines people moving from one country to another and building links between their communities of origin and their

communities of destination as *transmigrants*. Even though both groups of indigenous migrants present differences in the number of organised transnational ties, Cacaleño and Quialanense transmigrants carry out individual actions that situate them in a transnational field through monetary and social remittances. They stay in contact with their community when they send money to build houses, support the education of their relatives and sponsor celebrations. In fact, both communities have improved tremendously in terms of infrastructure due to monetary remittances from migrants. However, another important, but perhaps less visible, transformative aspect that keeps migrants and non-migrants linked are the socio-cultural messages/remittances that travel across borders. Peggy Levitt (2001) defines social remittances as the group of ideas; practices, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving to sending country communities.

The case of Quialana is a clear example of how transnational migrants in the US keep their “presence” in the community. Quialanense transmigrants ‘keep in touch’ through eight hometown associations: *Comité de San Bartolomé Quialana en el Exterior* (San Bartolomé Quialana Committee abroad), *Fundación Quialana* (Quialana Association), *Jóvenes Unidos para Cristo* (Youth united by Christ), *Organización Cristiana Pentecostal* (Christian Pentecostal Organisation), *Testigos de Jehová de San Bartolomé Quialana* (Jehovah’s Witnesses from San Bartolomé Quialana), *Organización Mesianica* (The Messianic), *Empresarios Independientes* (Independent Entrepreneurs) and *Amigos del Universo* (Friends of the Universe).

According to the study done by Rivera-Salgado and Escala Rabadán (2004), although there is not an exact number, in 2002 the Mexican Consulates in the US estimated that there were 700 Mexican migrant clubs or associations in the US.

Social-networks, through the so-called “common identity” (Kearney 1995 cited in Barabas 2008, p. 178), aim to give a protective framework to newcomers but also to support financially and symbolically their communities of origin through long-distance intervention in the town’s social, political and cultural lives. Overall social networks facilitate migration by lowering the emotional and economic cost of making the transition to life in the US (Gaytan *et al*, 2008). And thus, these social-networks create social-capital and better material, social and human resources for migrants (see Durand and Massey 2003).

The first transnational association created by Quialanense migrants in the US was a semi-formal committee established around 1990. The committee was not properly established as a regular association and only met sporadically to collect money among Quialanense to improve the infrastructure of the community. Thanks to this committee the community was able to build the auditorium, the basketball court and carry out improvements to the Catholic Church. This semi-formal committee is the precedent of the *Comité de San Bartolomé Quialana en el Exterior* (San Bartolomé Quialana Committee abroad), which was formally established as a hometown association in 2006. The purpose of this committee is the same, collecting money for the development and infrastructure of the committee, but its more important role is its neutrality. This committee is the only one which brings together all Quialanense independently of their gender, religious and social identities. Since 2007 *Comité de San Bartolomé Quialana en el Exterior* is working with the Oaxaca Organisation and with Oaxaca Federation in order to have a broader and stronger impact back in Quialana and in the state of Oaxaca.

Photo 7 San Bartolomé Quialana abroad



Photo taken by Fidel Gómez.¹²⁹

Fundación Quialana was founded in 2009 and its activities are related to ceremonial and traditional events. *Fundación Quialana* organises the annual patron saint celebration and other dances and parties in the US. The money collected at these events is sent back to the community for educational and infrastructural purposes.

Jóvenes Unidos para Cristo was established around 1994 under the Catholic faith precepts. The focus of their group according to Martin, the leader of the organisation, is to “evangelise Quialanense migrants who come to the US because when they arrive here they are very attracted to bad habits, especially to alcohol”. The goal of the group, apart from practicing their faith - Catholicism - is to organise

¹²⁹ Note that the clothes in this photo are very formal and ‘glamorous’ evening wear for most of the women, more varied for the men but in both cases nothing like traditional dress in the communities.

and arrange communal monetary and social remittances to Quialana¹³⁰. They claim that sending psychologists and missionaries is a way to help “men to be good Christians, to be closer to God, and to help women who have their sons or husbands here [in the US]” (Martin).

The organisation has two branches in the US, one in Los Angeles and one in Anaheim, the one in Anaheim having more members. Currently the association has around 350 members but in 2010 *Jóvenes Unidos para Cristo* almost disappeared; they only had 30 members because the number of Catholic followers decreased rapidly. The group built membership up again with the arrival of the charismatic movement in Quialana. Relatives in Quialana encourage, through transnational ties, their migrant relatives in the US to “go back” to God.

The *Organización Cristiana Pentecostal* emerged in 1993 through the Sánchez brothers. The establishment of the group can be traced back to one of the brothers who left the town as a Catholic in the 1980s but, through his contact with Pentecostal Christians in the US, was converted. The migrant affirms to having had a direct experience with God, who asked him to come back to Quialana to “spread the only truth”. Before coming back to his town the newly converted migrant managed to evangelise his relatives and convince them to join him on the journey back. The organisation became so popular among Quialanense in the US that it had about 700 members and in one single service the pastor managed to collect 30, 000 USD¹³¹. The group became so strong across the border that in 1995, amidst great resistance from the town’s inhabitants, the Christian Pentecostal Church (also called

¹³⁰ Members of *Jóvenes Unidos por Cristo* give part of their salary to improve the infrastructure of the community but also to fund missionaries and the opening of Catholic Church groups and religious activities back in Quialana.

¹³¹ Personal communication with Fidel Gómez.

Evangelics) was established in Quialana. Currently the Pentecostal Church in Quialana has approximately 200 active members of whom 80 percent are women.

Photo 8 Jóvenes Unidos para Cristo after their monthly Saturday meeting



Photo taken by the author

Five of the original founders of the *Organización Cristiana Pentecostal* have since separated and established another transnational organisation, *Organización Mesianica*, which also has a presence back in Quialana. This organisation was formally established in 2011 and has 40 active members in the US and a group of 5 in Quialana. Another small religious transnational organisation is *Testigos de Jehová de San Bartolomé Quialana*, which has 10 members in Greater Los Angeles and 15 members in Anaheim. The Jehovah's Witness group was founded in 2000 and every year celebrates their annual congress in Long Beach, California. This group also has a small presence in Quialana with no more than ten active members.

The so-called *Empresarios Independientes* is a group of Quialanense men and women who sell well-being products by catalogue. Currently the group has 50 active members and its motto is “we do not need to have a degree to succeed in life”. The *Empresarios Independientes* have sent generous donations to the local government.

Finally, *Amigos del Universo* is led by three Quialanense men who migrated to the US around the 1980s. The association was established in 1994 and its goal is to support Quialanense who want to grow professionally and economically in the US society. *Amigos del Universo* also created the Quialana Folkloric Ballet and the Quialana Chorus.

Photo 9 Amigos del Universo at their weekly Sunday meeting



Photo taken by the author.

Cohen *et al.* (2009) describes indigenous migrants from Oaxaca as the “quintessential transnational movers” (p. 15) due to the rich social networks established as they move between their rural communities and urban centres. The case of Cacaleño, however, diverges. In contrast to the wide array of organisations established by Quialanense and other indigenous migrants in the US; Cacaleño interaction with migrant organisations in the US and within Mexico is almost nil.

I found out that due to the small numbers and their scattered locations in the US, Cacaleño migrants have not funded any civic or religious organisation. Since they are still relatively close to the community and communication with the town is rather regular and “uncomplicated”, Cacaleño in urban Mexico do not see the necessity to establish a permanent organisation.

The only identified way Cacaleño transmigrants remain linked with their community is through the *cofradías* and through occasional meetings held in and around Mexico City related to religious activities. Frequently Cacaleño transmigrants donate important amounts of money and gifts to the annual festivity. The lack of Cacaleño transnational organisations may also help to explain why the community remains traditionally Catholic¹³² with no more than 15 Cacaleño registered as belonging to other religious denominations; there is certainly not the religious diversity that has started to emerge in Quialana

5.6 Conclusion

Even though Cacaloxtotec and Quialana are both indigenous communities, the patterns of transnational migration between them are different. Men and a small number of women (mainly single) from Cacaloxtotec first migrated within the

¹³² By traditional faith I mean the way in which they choose to practice their faith. People in Santiago Cacaloxtotec identified as traditional tend to go to church and keep quiet and ceremonial. They also prefer organ music and not being involved with dances or frequent retreats.

Mexican territory, especially to the outskirts of Mexico City, and then migrated to the US and Canada. In contrast, for many men and women from Quialana the first city experience they encountered was in the US. According to the fieldwork the most popular places of migration within Mexico are the urban centres of the country, and for those crossing physical borders, the most popular destination is the state of California, US.

In both communities, Cacaleño and Quialanense migrate to the US undocumented with the help of a smuggler and those Cacaleño who migrate to Canada do it with a temporary work contract. Moreover while Cacaleño and Quialanense in the US work in the service sector as gardeners, cooks and sellers; those in Canada work in the seasonal agricultural market. The profile of the migrant, among other aspects, has undergone important transformation in both communities. While 20 years ago most male migrants were married men migrating in their late 20s and early 30s, nowadays many first-time male migrants are single men in their late teens.

Although Cacaleño and Quialanense women have joined the migration stream, indigenous men still dominate as migrants from both communities, especially in migration towards the US which is perceived as riskier but more profitable, so more appropriate for a “man”. In fact, the fieldwork shows that the transnational migration phenomenon in Cacaloxtepec and Quialana is gendered, whereby men are “ideal subjects” for migration and women, children and the elderly are those who typically stay behind in the communities of origin.

Most Cacaleño and Quialanense return to their community of origin at least once in their life, but the great majority circulate between transnational spaces bringing and taking with them ideas and customs which are later incorporated in their

communities of origin and arrival. In order to stay linked with their communities Cacaleño and Quialanense send monetary and social remittances and have established organisations that influence both sides of the border. This was mainly observed among Quialanense transmigrants who have managed to establish different kinds of organisations in the US.

This chapter also explained that although Cacaleño and Quialanense migrants have mainly migrated due to economic restraints, in both communities a “culture of migration” (Cohen 2004) has emerged making the process of migration more than a necessity, it is a rite of passage which is expected more of men than of women.

Apart from contributing to the growing literature on indigenous migration, this chapter has shown how indigenous Mixtec migrants to the US are no longer exclusively employed in the agricultural sector, as previous research has argued. Based on the fieldwork carried out in Cacaloxtotec, the move to the service sector is related to the core-activities performed by inhabitants previous to migration (i.e. artisanal). The case of Cacaloxtotec also disrupts the idea that Oaxacan indigenous migrants are the quintessential transnational migrants and keep in touch with their communities through diasporic organisations. Cacaleño have not organised strong hometown associations, and the few that are established are linked to religion.

This work argues that in order to be embedded in a transnational space it is not necessary to undertake a physical action of migration, because, as Levitt (2001) argues, non-migrants also adapt many of the values and practices of their migrant counterparts and participate in organizations that act across borders. The importance of the transnational space among those who do not physically migrate will be further discussed in the following chapters when I analyse whether transnational migration

is indeed a catalyst in the reconstruction of gender relations and identity, and whether this might lead to empowerment.

Chapter 6. Reconstructing gender relations in Santiago Cacaloxtepec, San Bartolomé Quialana and in the diaspora

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores how gender relations and gender inequities are currently structured and perpetuated in both indigenous communities and the diaspora, and how they are changing. In particular, it asks what roles transnational migration plays in structuring, maintaining and changing these relations. The chapter addresses the first part of the second main research question using Agarwal's (1994) "bargaining" approach, which analyses gender relations in private (household) and in public (market, community and the State) spaces and sees them as interactive arenas that either converge or move in contradictory directions - cooperation or conflict. Differentiating these arenas makes it possible to assess whether progressive changes in gender relations in one arena are replicated in other arenas or whether there is imbalance, in that progressive change in one arena is not matched across the board.

My points of departure in analysing whether gender relations have been contested, challenged, maintained or reproduced involve (a) asking whether traditional gendered ways of being and doing are altering, and (b) observing generational, civil status and town differences in gender relations. Regarding the indigenous communities, the chapter examines the ethnographic fieldwork data from women's perspective and from a novel age/generational angle. Cacaleño and Quialanense women are divided into three main age groups: (a) 50 plus years old; (b) 25-49 years old; and (c) 17-24 years old, and each group is also divided by arena of analysis: household, market and community/state. Fieldwork data demonstrate that women of different age groups/generations are experiencing changes in the gender structures of

their household and communities, and that they both experience different changes and experience the same changes differently.

The data collected from the diaspora is not disaggregated by age nor by private and public arenas due to the smaller sample. Furthermore, most of the analysis is focused on Quialanense women due to the lack of Cacaleño women in the US¹³³. Most Cacaleño male migrants interviewed in the US were solo-migrants who have their families back in the village or in Mexico City. Overall married women in the diaspora have greater bargaining power at the household level, in two-earner households where men also have to share in reproductive work, and enjoy greater mobility and opportunities for self-development than women in the indigenous communities. However they face a marginal labour market position and, like all undocumented migrants, cannot formally participate in US politics.

Finally, the last section of this chapter presents the experiences faced by those women who are already participating in the public life of their communities. Most of these women have had to deal with negative situations which suggest that not only men but also women can become barriers to their further public participation.

6.2 The 50 plus

6.2.1 Household arena

At the household level this group of women tend to establish cooperative relationships. Most of them are married, do not have paid employment, are home makers and depend on men economically and socially. In both Cacaloxtotec and Quialana, they grew up at a time when men and the elderly made decisions about the

¹³³ Given the lack of Cacaleño women in the US, I present empirical evidence collected from other Mixtec women in the US.

lives of women and also the youth. Marriage was women's destiny and their status was strongly influenced by this act. For these women, as in many other "traditional" societies (de Haas and van Rooij 2010), one of the few acts that could have increased (by having a son) or decreased (by having only daughters) their bargaining power is being married and having children.

Quialanense and Cacaleño women aged 50 plus were, at least once in their lives, left behind by male migration. Their parents, brothers or husbands were part of the important migration of indigenous people in the 1970s-80s to industrial agricultural areas and urban centres in Mexico and the US (see Hernández-Díaz 2011a, Hulshof 1991, Stephen 1991). Although the decision to migrate was not theirs, they cooperated with the situation. An important number of women in this age range also experienced family migration - as wives or as daughters - to agricultural areas of Mexico (see chapter 5).

Male migration left these women subject to the authority of other relatives, as Diana explains:

The first time that my husband decided to go to the US I was very young, my two elder daughters were already with me and we were left under my parents-in-law's supervision. I became a servant to them, but I could not do anything. My parents in law did not even allow me to visit my mother and on the few occasions I visited my mum she would not offer me any support. My mum said that it was my destiny and that I had to respect my parents in law (Diana).

Diana's statement shows that indigenous women's fall-back position at the household level was nil. Diana's mother believed that, according to tradition, once married, women had to endure all kind of difficulties. Here is when Agarwal's (1994) borrowing of Burdieu's term "doxa" - the unchallenged, the unquestionable, a way to justify tradition - comes into play. Diana knew that there was no option for

her but to accept her husband's absence and the precarious situation of living with her in-laws. Diana's example also shows us how unequal gender relations are not only present between men and women but also among members of the same sex (i.e. between Diana and her mother-in-law). Structures of social hierarchy - seniority in this case - play an important role in the perpetuation of gender inequalities.

Some studies of migration have argued that male migration results in women taking on innovative roles and activities previously reserved for men (Aysa and Massey 2004, Mummert 1994), and that some women may even become heads of household (Brown 1983, Manjarrez Rosas 2010, O'Laughlin 2000). The case of the 50 plus indigenous women from Cacaloxtepec and Quialana complicates these findings. Although many Quialanense and Cacaleño were "in appearance" responsible for the family during their male relatives' absence, 50 plus women were left under in-laws' and relatives' supervision, who kept reminding them of their subordinate position in the family structure. Moreover, now that their male relatives have returned from the US or ceased their circular migratory movements within Mexico to retire in the village, the 50 plus women are subject to their husbands' authority at the household level.

However, Quialanense and Cacaleño in this age group do now enjoy the social hierarchy's bonus - as old women or mothers-in law - and might take part in the decision making process of family affairs, although they are still under the dominance of male relatives. I observed this situation when Carolina invited me to her niece's Christening. Carolina's brother, Joaquin, was working in Anaheim, California and had left his wife Mercedes under the surveillance of his parents in law (Carolina's parents). The Christening celebration took several days and involved

previous organization related with the cooking and the choosing of godparents for the little girl. One might think that the organization, preparation, and, in particular, the choice of godparents, would have been the responsibility of Mercedes, the mother, with some help from her relatives. However, according to the tradition Mercedes's mother-in-law was in charge of the entire festivity and Mercedes was just "helping" with the errands and following orders given by her mother-in-law. Even the money for the celebration was sent directly to Mercedes's mother-in-law. This empirical evidence shows how this 50 plus woman (Mercedes's mother-in-law) has come to occupy a different, more powerful, role through her age. She now might be seen as an active subject in the decision making process of the household. However at the same time Mercedes's mother-in-law is still under the control of her husband who decides the main affairs in the household, such as what to cultivate and how to invest the modest money earned from the sale of their harvest.

A similar situation of male dominance over 50 plus women is presented in Cacaloxtotec. I attended and participated in several *cofradías* celebrations and I observed that, although men were the public face of the celebrations, women carry out the heavy load of it: preparing food for the entire village. Yet, during the main meal the custom dictates that women, the ones who cooked for days in advance, must wait until men finish eating. While men eat, Cacaleño should keep alert to men's requirements, such as offering more food and bringing hot tortillas to the table. Soft drinks, alcohol and cigarettes are exclusively offered to men¹³⁴. This pattern of women feeding the male members of the family before everyone else is

¹³⁴ Because I was not Cacaleño that tradition did not apply to me. I was offered food at the same time as men and I was also offered cigarettes and alcohol. When I declined the cigarettes and alcohol Cacaleño men were not very disappointed because it is "normal" for a woman not to drink or smoke. However they were extremely disappointed when I told them that I did not drink Coca-Cola or any other fizzy drinks.

followed in the family house. It is important to note that many of the Cacaleño who prepare food for *cofradias* celebrations have been part, in one sense or another, of the migratory process and some of them have migrated themselves or even lived long periods of time in urban Mexico. Thus, even when 50 plus women have participated physically in migration that does not immediately imply a reconstruction of gender relations in women's favour.

6.2.2 The market arena

In the market arena, indigenous women's bargaining power, although present, is still highly restrained by gender inequalities. Nonetheless, the presence of indigenous women in the market arena is nowadays visible and highly influenced by male migration. Many 50 plus Cacaleño and Quialanense women started to have a presence in the market arena not only to obtain further economic resources but as a survival mechanism upon the lack of monetary remittances from their male relatives. Despite the fact that indigenous women were left under relatives' surveillance, Cacaleño and Quialanense women were immediately responsible for their children's basic needs (e.g. food).

It is well documented (see de Hass 2005; Ramirez *et al.* 2005; Vargas 2010) that migrants at their arrival in their communities of destination might face difficulties in settling in their first jobs, and even those who have arranged employment through their networks might use their first payments to pay back smugglers or loans related with migration. As a consequence, and among other reasons, the sending of remittances might be inconsistent, leaving those in the community of origin with almost no resources.

In Quialana, one of the first strategies that 50 plus women (and also the 25-49 years old group) implement is the making of *tlayudas* to sell among their neighbours and relatives. But when this income-strategy is not enough, Quialanense women venture to Tlacolula market or to the market day in their village, where they sell *tlayudas*, flowers¹³⁵, and other agricultural products. In this way, 50 plus Quialanense women transform their status from “consumers” to “producers” and “providers”, but without leaving behind their reproductive activities. In fact, most of these commercial places (Tlacolula market and the village market-day), once men’s domain, along with the commercial food activities (e.g. prepared food stands), have become feminised.

Feminisation of the commercialization of food, plus the gender disadvantages - in skills and education - that Quialanense women in this age group confront, result in high competition and poor profits. As a consequence women’s bargaining power in the household is difficult to increase. I saw Hortencia and Teresa twice a week preparing *tlayudas* for more than eight hours to sell at Tlacolula market. But Hortencia argues that making *tlayudas* is not profitable anymore: “there is a lot of competition and sometimes I have to sell my *tortilla* [*tlayuda*] at seven pieces for 10 pesos [50 pence]. Many women sell them at five pieces for 10 pesos but I cannot do that, otherwise I would not be able to sell them all”.

In Cacaloxtotec some 50 plus women supplement the lack of remittances by joining the job market as maids in the nearest market town of Huajuapán de León. However their presence in domestic service is limited because of the restrictions that male relatives impose on Cacaleño.

¹³⁵ Flowers are generally planted and harvested by Quialanense women.

Photo 10 50 plus Quialanense women supervising the food preparation for the 2010 annual celebration



Photo taken by the author.

Photo 11 50 plus Cacaleño wait while men finish eating



Photo taken by the author.

As in many other communities, in Cacaloxtepec, allowing women to work outside the home calls into question men's masculinity and social status (see Ramos Padilla 2004). This attitude has been further reinforced by women themselves, as Martha recalls: "My aunt [a 50 plus Cacaleño] [...] says: "women should not leave their home, if they want to work they can sell something but in their houses. "Do something in your house! You don't have to leave your house"".

Social seclusion imposed on 50 plus Cacaleño led the production of hats to be an activity dominated by women who started to get involved in the business mainly due to male migration. Men were away from home earning money in urban areas and 50 plus Cacaleño stayed at home making a bit of money by weaving hats. Most Cacaleño make their hats at home and then they sell them to a Cacaleño middle-man who sells them to final distributors. 50 plus Cacaleño women's participation in the market through home-working not only keeps them hidden but also generates very little money. For 12 hats made, Cacaleño only get 75 Pesos (approximately £4).

Hence, cultural specifications of appropriate female behaviour in both communities, along with gender gaps in skills and education, have restrained the bargaining position of indigenous women in the market arena. However, the migration of their male relatives and the necessity to obtain money to support their families have pushed them to have a presence in the market space, even if only partially and often hidden.

Photo 12 Elderly women in Cacaloxtepc weaving hats



Photo taken by the author.

6.2.3 Community and State arena

According to Agarwal's bargaining framework of analysis (1994) an individual is likely to cooperate with the community in so far as it brings her/him greater economic, social, or political gain than possible otherwise (p.73). However in this age group, at first sight Cacaleño and Quialanense women do not obtain any common good from the community. The only common good observed during the fieldwork was the intangible gain that their seniority offers to them. 50 plus Cacaleño and Quialanense are well respected and listened to in the community because of their position in the age hierarchy. Some people mentioned to me that the respect that they have in their community is the minimum payment that they get after all those years of sorrow, hard work and submission. At community level, migration has not brought any major determinant changes for the 50 plus. The only

indirect impact of migration that has benefited this age group in Quialana is the creation of more and varied religious groups where women can obtain some sort of support.

Partly funded government programmes, such as the saving fund ITA-YEE in Cacaloxtepec, offer economic and social support to every woman in the community. However, the majority of its members belong to the 50 plus group and the reason might be, paradoxically, their disposable income. Some 50 plus (especially the 70 plus) receive at least two incomes from the Mexican federal government (*70 y más* and *Oportunidades*) and as they are no longer responsible for young children or any other relative they can put some aside to save.

The local State has been one of the areas most impacted by transnational migration. In both communities the lack of suitable male members has, in a sense, opened spaces for female community members to come to the front and participate in the local State apparatus. The local State in both communities has been persuaded to pass gender progressive laws and accept women as members of committees, in administrative position and as government officers. However 50 plus Quialanense and Cacaleño follow the traditional structures and until today, they only have indirect presence in the State arena¹³⁶.

Mexican federal State law has played a more determining role in the re-structuring of gender relations for this age group. Through its social development programmes the federal State has included in its agenda the so-called “*igualdad de género*” (gender equality). The programmes encourage female participation and some

¹³⁶ Cacaleño government officers’ wives (who on average belong to this group) participate in the political events of the community. Officers’ wives also support government activities, but most of the roles performed by women are restrained to cooking or cleaning.

involve “work-money” exchange. *Oportunidades* is an example of these policies. Indigenous women who belong to this programme receive some extra pocket money in exchange for attending monthly health-advice meetings (see Molyneux 2007). The positive aspect that can be taken from this programme - as well as the saving fund ITA-YEE - is the fact that 50 plus women obtain their own money which might be translated into an increase in their intra-household bargaining power.

In both towns, the community has opened more spaces for female participation (e.g. *tequio* and community committees) which have been introduced in part due to the shortage of male members of the community and also due to the gender progressive laws that the Mexican federal state has deployed in the entire country. Despite these “opportunities”, 50 plus Quialanense and Cacaleño women might appear as simple subjects who have decided not to participate. However, let us not forget that women’s extra-household bargaining power (i.e. in the community) is only a reflection of their weak intra-household bargaining power. In this way we can conclude that at the community arena 50 plus women establish a relation of cooperation with the community by following the “traditional” established rules and by not taking advantage of the few, but nevertheless, open spaces for participation. The 50 plus have not obtained the material or symbolic resources (i.e. education) to challenge their customs and traditions. Moreover, Agarwal (1997) argues that the ability of someone to challenge norms that go against their self-interest would depend on at least three factors: their economic situation, the link between command over property and control over institutions that shape ideology, and group strength (p. 21). Looking at the public and private arenas where the 50 plus transit, it is difficult to talk about an increase in their bargaining power and even less so a reconfiguration of gender relations. Migration has brought new panoramas to the

communities and has opened spaces for different kinds of gender relations in both communities, however the 50 plus tend to stick with the traditional structures. A different perspective is seen in the following two age groups of indigenous women.

6.3 The 25-49 year olds

6.3.1 Household arena

At the household level this group of women tend to establish cooperative and conflict relationships within and outside the household. An important number of women in this age group are married, home makers and depend on men economically and socially. But there are also women who have managed not only to get a job outside the home but also to learn about their rights and question their household relationships. In Quialana, I interviewed Maria who talked about her current relationship with her husband. Maria was given into marriage by her parents when she was 14 years old, having seen her current husband only twice. Maria stated that she did not love her husband but that she got used to him after a while, especially after having children. Sex was not a pleasant experience but she always made sure to fulfil all her responsibilities as housewife (e.g. laundry and cooking).

As she recounts:

And little by little I stopped trying to be nice to him and now I am totally used to it. And now he wants me to be in a certain way but I cannot because [...] it is not natural and he says “it is because you do not love me, because you are cheating on me” and of course it is not that but I cannot even explain it because sometimes I want to change and I tell him “I think it is your fault, if you would have been different?” and he says “I know! But it is part of the past” [...]. For instance, now we sometimes have arguments and when I know it was my fault of course I apologise but when it is not my fault why should I apologise? And he says “why are not you the same as before?” and now that I have received talks [from DIF] and we have been advised [through equality and domestic violence programmes] it is even more difficult for me [to be mistreated].

Maria's statement gives us a hint in the transformation of intra-household gender relations through time. When Maria got married her attitude towards her unequal situation was one of cooperation but after a while her bargaining power has increased and she is now willing to get into conflict to defend her rights within her relationship. Maria is using what Agarwal calls (1997, p. 18) "implicit or covert" forms of contestation. Maria's complaints and withholding of sex from her husband are actions noted as conflict strategies and a hint that she can get a better deal.

Transnational migration has played an important role in this transformation, but education, exposure to the outside world and gender progressive programmes implemented by the federal government, like DIF equality and domestic violence programmes, have also had an impact.

Cases like Maria's are rare and not the common pattern in Quialana, but they represent a trend towards more egalitarian household relationships. Moreover, shifts in intra-household relationships are not exclusive to married couples. Children, parents and extended family are also considered to establish private relations in the bargaining framework. Guadalupe, a 32 year old Quialanense who for more than 15 years worked as a nurse in the village, decided to remain single and to challenge the authority of her parents when during her adolescence she strongly rejected an arranged marriage.

G: [...] people of my age are married, have children, even are about to have grandchildren. And while living here what girls expect is to get married, have children, have someone to provide for them, and I do not think that way. [...] I could have married when I was very young but when they [a man] came to ask my parents [to give me in matrimony] I talked with my father and he understood that I did not want to get married.

Guadalupe is the daughter of a returnee migrant and five of her siblings are migrants (4 in the US and 1 in Guadalajara, Mexico). She argues that she was able to reject

marriage at such a young age having spent time with doctors in Oaxaca City, who influenced and gave her “other kind of ideas”.

In Cacaloxtepec, the panorama in terms of transformation at the intra-household arena seems to show at least a trend to “voice dissent”. Several chats with women in this age group indicated how they managed to get their voice heard in family affairs. Monica, who works part time cooking at the village nursery, says that when her husband, who works in Mexico City and comes back every month to the town, does not want to help her with the household chores, she reacts thus: ”Do you think that being at home is easy? I am responsible for the house, the kids, school... I clean, cook, etc. Do you think it is easy?”. Meanwhile Fatima claims that she loves her washing machine more than her husband because “at least my washing machine helps me to do my work, not like my husband who only gives me more work. If my washing machine breaks I suffer but if my husband is not at home, then it is better for me”.

Transnational migration has influenced the attitude that women have towards their household relationship. As Monica affirms, “women get used to being alone without their partners”. However, although women tend to have greater autonomy and gain access to social and economic resources which were previously beyond their reach, the figure of the male (even when they are very far away) influences women’s everyday activities. Women in this age group in both villages are expected to consult their partners on important decisions in the household, such as the amount of money they spend on food or issues related with children’s education (e.g. the cost of the uniform or special permission for school trips). This was confirmed in conversation with primary and secondary teachers in both communities. In fact, one of the main

problems that teachers faced was the mothers' indecision over issues which were trivial from the teachers' perspective, such as deciding whether her child was allowed to participate in the annual dance. Teachers mentioned that the common answer is "let me talk with my husband about it" or "let's see what his father says about it".

In Cacaloxtotec, as a way of dealing with her loneliness, Tania spent most of her time in her mother's house, but conflict started when on several occasions Raimundo, who works in Stockton, California, tried to phone Tania without response. Raimundo, angry about the situation, asked Tania to reduce the amount of hours spent at her mother's place and to confirm that his instructions were followed, he started to phone her every day in the late afternoon.

As well as migrants at a distance, relatives - especially parents-in-law - and the community in general seem to reinforce traditional gender relations through gossip, indirect surveillance and by keeping traditions and customs. Again, women's bargaining power is at a disadvantage when traditions and customs are waived by men but asserted by women. The case of Alejandra from Cacaloxtotec exemplifies this situation. Alejandra is 32 years old and has been married to Javier for ten years. Javier is a musician and has never engaged in labour migration; he belongs to a local band that plays at parties and festivities. In ten years of marriage Alejandra and Javier have not had a child and this fact has been much commented on by the community¹³⁷. In order to prove that he was not the one with the problem, Javier conceived a son with another woman from the same village. When Alejandra found out about it she ran away and went to stay with her mother and father. For Alejandra

¹³⁷ In Santiago Cacaloxtotec not being able to get pregnant and have a child is stigmatized and the blame lies with the woman.

and Javier's families, the "bad action" was not that Javier had an affair with another woman but that Alejandra abandoned her husband. Javier's and Alejandra's parents met to discuss their children's marital problems and find a solution. Javier and Alejandra did not participate in the discussion and only followed the advice of their parents. Unsurprisingly, in most of these meetings women are the ones who are found guilty. The verdict is that they have not been able to serve their husbands adequately and as a consequence men had to find, in one way or another, what they could not obtain at home.

6.3.2 Market arena

In Cacaloxtotec, women at work in this age range comprise two nurses, one teacher, a book keeper, and a police officer who works in Huajuapán de León. In Cacaloxtotec there are a few cases where women have decided to establish their own business. The most representative are corner shops, selling maize hot drinks (*atole*), a taxi service, and a small hat factory. Male transnational migration has not been the main driving force in women's greater participation in the market arena. According to the empirical evidence, most women have joined the job market due to economic necessity and even when their partners are around. Most Cacaleño in this age group have worked, at least in one period of their lives, as maids, employees, cooks, vendors or cleaners in urban areas of Mexico. I found only one example of Cacaleño integration to the market arena due to male migration, Rosa Elia, who is in her early 40s and stayed behind in the community while her husband migrated to New York and Chicago. As happened with the 50 plus women, the lack of remittances encouraged Rosa Elia to establish her small maize hot drinks business (*atole*), enabling her to complete the expenses required for the construction of her house and to buy a piece of land on the outskirts of the village.

Erman (1997) and Taylor *et al.* (2006) have argued that when men return to their community of origin, gender relations revert to the traditional stage; women return to their household activities and men retake their role as providers and principal decision takers. However in the case of Rosa Elia that did not happen. It has been more than five years since her husband came back to finally settle down in the community and Rosa Elia still sells her *atole*. Although Rosa Elia's husband got a job as a police officer in Huajuapán de León, Rosa Elia is the main breadwinner and through her business she has also managed to cover the tuition fees of her daughter's private university and obtain a loan to buy a truck. Moreover, the business has allowed Rosa Elia to become popular among the community, which also resulted in her election as the first female government officer.

Leticia and Delia are also examples of the greater participation of Cacaleño women in the market arena. Leticia, apart from being the community nurse from Monday to Saturday, works as a taxi driver on Sundays. Leticia is in her late 40s, has never been married, and it is well known in the community for her bad moods. People in the town believe that Leticia's bad mood is a consequence of being a spinster.

Delia is the owner of the biggest corner shop in Cacaloxtotec and a small hat factory. Delia has a technical book keeping degree obtained in Mexico City and as a prize for her academic achievements she inherited the corner shop from her parents. A few years later Delia bought the small hat factory from her father, the previous owner. Delia is married and has her husband working for her in both businesses. Delia employs five male workers from a neighbouring town and subcontracts no more than five people from Cacaloxtotec to decorate the hats. Delia only has three main clients plus casual individual buyers from the region. Although Delia's

husband supervises the processes in the small factory, Delia is the one in charge of controlling the accounts.

Leticia and Delia show that migration is not the only factor that sets the script in terms of public gender relations. They have both managed to acquire greater bargaining power in the market arena due to their education, work experience and family networks.

Photo 13 Providing immunization to children in San Bartolomé Quialana



Photo taken by the author.

In Quialana, as Matea recalls, women are directly and indirectly integrated in the market arena.

[a]t the moment almost only women live here in the town but all of them work. Some of them sew clothes to sell them, some others cultivate flowers, some others make tortillas to sell, but all of them do something [...] Yes every [Quialanense] woman works.

A few 25-49 years old Quialanense women have opened corner shops, haberdasheries and small restaurants. Many of these women have set up their business with the money received from their relatives in the US and some others, like Matea, found themselves disenchanted when their partners did not remit while working in the US.

Well, when I started [with the shop] it was because of a necessity that is why I started. I thought of opening a shop because her father [Matea's daughter's father] abandoned us. He left us [to go to the US] and he did not send any money to support us and that is why I opened a little shop [...].

As depicted in the above examples, the migration phenomenon has been a partial force in the re-structuring and greater participation of indigenous women in this age group in both communities. The 25-49 years old definitely have a more visible presence in the market arena and greater bargaining power. With their integration in the market arena, indigenous women have gained greater personal autonomy, independence and self-reliance. In contrast only a few indigenous women hold a formal job. Apart from the administrative jobs offered by the local or federal institutions (at the health centre), most women in Cacaloxtepic and Quialana are simultaneously “peasant”, “farmer” or “seller”, but none of those jobs enjoy social benefits such as health insurance, annual leave or a pension scheme.

6.3.3 Community and State arena

This arena is one of the most visible spaces where the 25-49 Quialanense and Cacaleño women have re-written public gender relations. Only ten years ago indigenous women in Quialana were not allowed to participate in the cargo system, and only in October 2010 did women obtain the right to vote at the general assembly. In Quialana women's participation within the cargo system, directly or indirectly, has definitely increased. Most women first start their political and civil

participation in the cargo system through committees. Male transnational migration has had in this area a determinant role and women in this age range are the ones to have taken greatest advantage of the situation. However greater political and civil participation is in many cases carried out in order to maintain the family honour within the community, as in Carolina's case.

C: Well, I would say that it [*cargo*] was almost forced, because I told him [municipal president] that I could not accept the cargo because of my youngest daughter [she needed to look after her youngest daughter] but then he told me that I had to go, [...] but I accepted because I heard that people were saying that because my husband is not here, and he is not giving any service, well as a consequence I have to give service [to the community].

Carolina accepted the cargo to stop criticism and rumours related with her migrant husband's lack of *cargo* participation and her statement clarifies that the current restructuring of gender relation at the community level is by no means straightforward. Some scholars have called women's situation one of "borrowed citizenship" (Juan Martínez 2012). However I argue that although women might have been encouraged - or forced - to participate, this exposure to the public political arena has the potential to translate in the future into greater and more solid bargaining power.

In Cacaloxtotec women obtained the right to vote with the introduction of political parties, but as in Quialana, indigenous women's tangible political participation starts at committee level. Being part of a committee does not require any political party alignment, but if women wish to continue participating in further political or civil positions, they need to belong to the political party in power. Martha was the first woman to be elected by the PRI assembly as a government officer candidate; however she did not accept the position because her friend 'advised' her to avoid problems with her husband. Although Martha did not accept the position, during the

political campaign she was the municipal president substitute runner, and once in power she was the first woman employee in local government working as a secretary.

The police force in Quialana created controversy because many Quialanense saw the institutionalization of the police as a threat to local traditional customary law. Let us not forget that before the existence of police officers the judiciary power was bestowed on *topiles*, who used to carry out the same functions as the current police officers. The difference is that the position of *topil* is an honorary position - within the customary law - that did not receive payment and did not involve the use of weapons. Nowadays, the police officers are not only trained but also receive a monthly payment, but what is important in terms of gender relations is the fact that the police force is open to women whereas the *topil* position (which still exists but with modified functions) was and still is fulfilled exclusively by male members of the community. In the last five years there has been only one female police officer, Liliana. She belongs to the 25-49 age group and lived and worked for almost a decade in Mexico City. Liliana is called “lesbian” or “tomboy” and for the community in general it has been difficult to digest the idea of a woman as a police officer. For many Quialanense women she is the counter idea of what a woman is supposed to be in the town. Liliana has short hair, always wears trousers, is single, does not want to speak Zapotec and is always among men¹³⁸. In contrast, in Cacaloxtepec the government has preferred not to establish an institutional police force. They still use the position of *topil*, which remains male dominated.

¹³⁸ In July 2011 during the last stage of the fieldwork I found out that Liliana tried to escape to the US with one of her male police officer colleagues when their affair was discovered. They could not cross the border and the male police officer came back to Quialana but Liliana could not. Nobody really knows her whereabouts, some people said that she lives in Tijuana and some others believe she went back to Mexico City.

The current government in Cacaloxtepec includes five women (four employees and one government officer), as does that of San Bartolomé Quialana (one government officer and four female employees). It is important to note that most women participating in the community and local State organizations are in the 25-49 age range.

As in the previous age range, the federal Mexican State has helped with the introduction of gender equality programmes which aim to inform women about their rights. Quialanense and Cacaleño in this age range have taken great advantage of these programmes, regularly attending workshops and talks about domestic violence and health care, among others. With their participation, the 25-49 year olds have influenced their local government to also establish gender equality rules¹³⁹. These re-configurations, of course, are modest if we judge them by the feminist ideals of egalitarianism, but they are significant when compared with the patriarchal community organisation that was normative before transnational migration. The fact that the local general assembly, in the case of Quialana, and the political parties' assemblies in Cacaloxtepec, have named or elected women for political and public position shows a clear restructuring of gender relations between the individual(s) and the community. Even at the ceremonial level women have been considered. For instance in 2010 the most prestigious religious post in Quialana (*mayordomo*) was given to a woman. Whilst it is important to recognise that the first *mayordoma* has been living and working in Arizona, US, most of her life, it would be a mistake to ignore such an achievement in terms of gender equality.

¹³⁹ For example in communities rule under customary law, the Mexican federal government encourages municipal governments to allow women to vote and participate in the political development of the town.

Unfortunately some women who have been elected within political parties' assemblies or in the local general assembly still see these opportunities restricted by their male relatives: "I cannot [accept] because my brothers do not allow me to do so. They said that as a woman I should not be among men" (Consuelo). Further, most women - with the exception of Martha in Cacaloxtepec - who have been able to participate in the public arena of their communities manifest that they would not do it again because "men are not used to work with us [women] and because of that they think they can treat us like at home. No more! My first and last experience in the government" (Hilda).

6.4 The 17-24 years old

6.4.1 Household arena

An important number of women in this age range are still single, mostly living with their parents and extended family, or in their first years of marriage. The common denominator for these young women is that they are daughters, wives or sisters of transmigrants. This group of women have enjoyed the economic benefits of migration but at the same time they have also been highly impacted by what Zafra and Juan Martínez (2010) call "the emotional cost of migration". Claudia, a 19 years old Quialanense, contextualises the emotional cost of her father's migration; Claudia grew up with an imaginary father-figure who only sent presents and was absent most of the time:

In total, since I was born, well almost, he [father] has been with us no more than one year or two years, maybe I have lived with my father for about a year. Because when I was younger, when my mum was pregnant, my father was not, my father was not with my mum when she was expecting me. He only came back when I was three years old and if he goes [to the US] he would go for a long period of time, for two or three or four years. My mum said that when my father came back and I was three years old, I treated him like a complete stranger, for me my father was my uncle, the one who was

living in my house [...] When he was in Los Angeles he always sent me stuff, clothes, dolls, all those things, so he would say “daughter here it is, and you will get your clothes soon, I am sending you this because I love you”. So I focused only on that, on the material stuff, because I wanted to believe that my dad loved me because he always sent stuff and all those things, but in reality I never had his love, a love... a kind of love where he would tell me “I love you or take care of yourself” words...

As in Claudia’s case, many women in this age group had a relationship with their parents based on material goods which ironically, without diminishing the psychological impacts of this kind of relationships (see Aresti de la Torre 2010), have re-structured the gender relations in the family. The absence of the patriarchal figure and greater economic resources, along with the extra-household changes within the indigenous communities, have resulted in more exposure to the outside world and higher levels of education for the women aged 17-24 years old.

Currently, seven Quialanense women in the town are enrolled in higher education (university level) and while finishing the fieldwork during summer 2011, two more were waiting to get into university. In order to go to university, women have to leave their communities and travel to urban areas¹⁴⁰. Except for one, the rest of the university students are sponsored by their relatives in the US. An example of this is Leslie who studies Criminology in Oaxaca City: “I rent a room for 1,000 Pesos [£50] and my tuition fees and I can pay because of migration. My father works in a sushi restaurant in Los Angeles”.

In July 2011 as I left Cacaloxtotec, Edith was accepted at the public university in Oaxaca City to study physiotherapy, the first woman from the town to achieve this status. It is important to look at the achievements of women in education because education has “far reaching effects” (UNFPA 2012) in terms of gender relations. It

¹⁴⁰ Six young women out of seven studied within the state of Oaxaca and one has moved to Mexico City to study in one of the most prestigious public universities in the country (Instituto Politecnico Nacional).

has been shown that education helps to close gender gaps, and this as a consequence tends to prepare the field for more egalitarian relationships in private and public space (Grown *et al.*, 2005). In terms of population, the number of Cacaleño and Quialanense women enrolled in higher education is very modest (one percent or less), but at least an important number of the 17-24 years old have finished secondary school.

At the household level this group of women have increased their bargaining power and even the strict household rules that secluded their mothers and grandmothers are being relaxed. This is particularly observed among those Quialanense and Cacaleño women who are still single. For those in this age group who are already married things are a bit different because although they are not as restricted as older women, the fact that they are married seems to put them in a different category. Carla from Cacaloxtotec mentioned that after she got married, her husband asked her to quit her secretarial job because “that is why he is the man of the house and he wanted to feel that he was able to support me”. Maricela, who grew up in Anaheim, California and came back to look after her mother-in-law, was also having problems with her husband’s family having got a part-time job in a Tlacolula radio station. The questioning and criticism was not coming from her husband, who at that time was working in Anaheim, but from her sisters-in-law who see the radio station as an “inadequate place for decent married women”.

6.4.2 Market arena

Single women in this age group have an important role in the market arena. Traditionally most Quialanense teenagers get a part-time job in Tlacolula market. In contrast to those women aged 50 plus who sell *tortillas*, fruits and vegetables in the

market, the 17-25 years old are concentrated in services. Single 17-25 year old Quialanese women work washing up or as waitresses at food stands¹⁴¹. The main reasons to join the job market are to gain experience, practice their Spanish and economic necessity. The opportunity that working in the market represents for this age group is an example of the change in gender relations; previous generations of women were not even able to go out into the village streets, let alone go to Tlacolula, a town which is only 15 minutes away by car.

But nowadays for 17-25 year olds Quialanense women working in Tlacolula is a rite of passage, and transnational migration has indirectly influenced this change. Since Quialanense women have had the opportunity to attend school due to the monetary remittances sent by their relatives in the US, they have obtained greater “tools” to face the *outside* world. Being able to speak Spanish has become an advantage when joining the job market, but still the fact that these young women come from Quialana, an indigenous town, makes them subject to discrimination and in general they are badly paid¹⁴².

In Cacaloxtotec the integration of 17-25 year old women is less visible within the community because many of them, if they are not still studying, migrate to the outskirts of Mexico City to work in the service sector. During the fieldwork in Cacaloxtotec I only met two young women who had formal jobs in Huajuapán de León; one was a junior police officer and the other one a nurse assistant.

¹⁴¹ Most of them work only during Sunday which is the day when the town has its weekly market and people from all around the Central Valleys of Oaxaca come to sell their products. Others work on a more regular basis and on average three to five days a week.

¹⁴² For an eight-hour day on Sunday Quialanense women earn 100 Pesos (£5) and that of course does not include any social benefits. On several occasions when I went to the market and visited my friends I heard their employers using derogatory terms when talking to them such as: girl, or stupid india (indigenous woman).

Within both indigenous communities, the local administration has opened some jobs up to women in this age group. For instance in Quialana two 17-25 year olds work cleaning the government offices or the streets, three women are hired twice a week as post deliverers and some others work as helpers in the library or in the treasury. However it is important to mention that the group of women who have obtained a job within the communities are those who have finished the equivalent of A-levels, and all were sponsored by their relatives (fathers mainly) who work in the US.

For Quialanense or Cacaleño women in this age range who are married things are different. It is not uncommon for 17-24 year old married women to be living with their parents-in-law because their husbands are already in the US. A great majority of them do not work outside the home and if they do work, they do it in a “helper” capacity. If their mothers-in-law sell vegetables in Tlacolula market the young married women might come along and help them to serve the clients or to carry products.

In this age group gender relations in the market arena have definitely improved if we compare them with the 50 plus and the 25-49 year old women. Education, financed by monetary remittances, has been the principal axis in the re-arrangement of gender relations. Nowadays women leave their villages to gain experience that allows them to face the *outside* world. In contrast, it is important not to forget that these women joined a job market already ethnically segregated, feminised and precarious. Women in this group who have managed to achieve a certain level of education tend to obtain more administrative and better paid jobs.

As the empirical work has shown, greater bargaining power and re-arrangements in gender relations strongly depend on whether women are married (or live in partnership) or not.

Photo 14 17-24 Quialanense women helping to cultivate beans



Photo taken by the author.

6.4.3 Community and State arena

The communities of Quialana and Cacaloxtepec tend to be more flexible with women in this age range. But as with the market arena, women who are single enjoy greater benefits than those who are married. For instance, nowadays both communities do not restrict the presence of this group of single women on the streets. On some occasions I observed groups of friends meeting in the main street to chat or walk around. This group of women have bargained to change the rules on dressing in both communities. Now it is not uncommon to see young Cacaleño or

Quialanense wearing blue jeans or colourful tops. In fact most of these “modern” clothes, as they called them, are sent by their migrant relatives. The communities, through committees, have also started to organize recreational activities for young people in the towns, the most common being dances. According to Teresa, a 50 plus Quialanense, these street dances are a new thing in the town, previously Quialana only had dances during the annual festivity and only women with their husbands or women who were considered “not very decent” attended these events. Now, Teresa affirms “life is so easy for these young women! They can now go and dance until late and nobody says anything”.

I attended dance events in both communities and I observed how these events took place. In Quialana the dances are on the community basketball court and beers and snacks are sold, but alcoholic drinks are “restricted” to the 17-24 year old group. Although there is not a written rule and it is not restricted by the organisers, tradition dictates that only single women or women accompanied with their husband get in. Because the dance takes place in an outdoor venue, women whose husbands are working outside the village and elderly women bring some chairs along and sit outside the basketball court to observe the dance and listen to the music. At these events, 17-24 year old single women take the opportunity to show off their long hair and their high-heels. They sit around in women-only groups and wait to be approached by young unmarried men who invite them to the dance floor. This is the only place where Quialanense women are allowed to have physical contact - through dancing - with the opposite sex without being judged by the community, which still has strict rules about courting.

In Cacaloxtepec rules are more “relaxed”. All women, married or unmarried, accompanied by their husband or not, are “allowed” to attend the dances. However the Cacaloxtepec community also has rules that control women’s behaviour¹⁴³. It was interesting to see that in both communities alcohol consumption was, if not forbidden, restricted for the 17-24 year old women, but socially accepted among the 50 plus. In fact, it was not uncommon to see drunk 50 plus women walking around the communities. When I asked about this inconsistency people told me that 50 plus women were “allowed” to drink because “they are already old, we respect them and they can do whatever they want”.

Another community area where women in this age group have found social support is in the church (further developed later in this chapter). Quialanense indigenous women play an important role in the religious arena and it is perhaps their most visible participation in terms of community formation. At the Catholic Church in Quialana, the choir and the mass team are formed exclusively by young women and currently the main church organizer is a 19 year old woman, Marlene. No more than five years ago this position was exclusively for Quialanense men. Although Marlene is under the surveillance of the local Catholic priest, she coordinates and organises the Catholic ministries within the community.

In contrast, in Cacaloxtepec the church does not represent a space of reunion or participation for the 17-24 year old women. In general the church in Cacaloxtepec has not managed to congregate the town’s population on a very regular basis. The

¹⁴³ Single women in this age range are allowed to dance and talk with unmarried men but married women are only allowed to dance with their husband or with their close relatives. Although it is not forbidden, women in this age group are judged if they consume high quantities of alcohol or if they stay at the dance until late.

only religious groups that exist in the town are rather small and comprise the 50 plus or the 25-49 groups.

The local State, along with the community, has also re-structured their gender policies towards this group of women by offering recreational and cultural activities. The recently established *Casa de la Cultura* (House of Culture) offers workshops in regional dance, painting, *piñata*¹⁴⁴ making and music. It is important to note that *Casa de la Cultura* and its activities are sponsored by migrants working in the US. Men and women are welcome to enrol in one of the several workshops offered. However the workshops are still strongly divided in terms of traditional gender assumptions: young women choose to dance and young men take photography or painting classes. In the same manner, single women are those who take advantage of the State implementation. Emilia, a married Quialanense who lived with her parents-in-law and has not seen her husband for more than two years, explains why the fact that she is married excludes her from these opportunities:

I wanted to go to the *piñata* making workshop but, according to my mother-in-law, I am a married woman and a married woman doesn't need to do this. I would like to work and go out but I cannot because my parents-in-law don't allow me to do it.

Finally, the 17-24 year old women's participation in the creation of local State policies and activities is still very limited. These women are seen as too young and inexperienced to make a significant contribution to government, which is strongly based on traditions and customs¹⁴⁵. Thus, in both communities the local State has re-considered its (gender) policies and attitudes towards only some indigenous women.

¹⁴⁴ A *piñata* is a container made often of papier-mâché, pottery, or cloth and decorated, filled with toys and/or candy, and then broken as part of a ceremony or celebration.

¹⁴⁵ Except for the municipal secretary in Quialana who belongs to this group.

Most of them fall in the 25-49 category and tend to have at least some years of education. Without being discouraging, it is clear that gender relations are being progressively re-structured but only among a specific sector of the population.

So far this chapter has paid careful attention to how Agarwal's framework can be applied to the empirical evidence concerning women's bargaining power and shifts in gender relations, and numerous direct quotations have been provided by way of substantiation of the argument. Appendix 5 provides a table with all the variables of analysis summarized at a glance (age group; community (place); arena (household, market, community/state), for ease of reference.

6.5 In the diaspora

Most Quialanense women who migrated to the US did so after their fathers or husbands "asked them to come" and join them. Since their male relatives had obtained experience working and living in the US for some years, the women benefited from their relatives' migration experiences. However, male migrants' previous experience has not helped them to find better paid jobs in the US. A good number of Quialanense women start working as cleaners or baby sitters with very low salaries. Most Quialanense women are undocumented and this migratory status limits them to precarious jobs. Being undocumented leaves them in a very fragile state; they can be dismissed at any time by their employer and are forced to work more than 10 hours a day without the benefit of overtime payment (see Hugo 2000). The entrance to an ethnically segregated job market (Ramirez 2011) in a society where indigenous Mexican immigrants are located at the bottom (Cohen *et al.* 2009) is not a problem exclusively faced by women. Most Quialanense men had coped with these circumstances and after a while have managed to establish their own

networks and areas of “safeness”. The social networks constructed by male migrants are definitely an advantage for Quialanense women, who at least when arriving in the US can meet and interact with other Quialanense women who previously arrived. This interaction with other immigrants facilitates their integration into community life.

Quialanense migrants in the US have created different kinds of hometown associations that allow them to meet, share ideas and help each other. As previously mentioned, these hometown associations vary in relation to their goals and in some cases the association welcomes other Latino, Oaxacans or indigenous immigrants. Luin Goldring (2001) in her research of Mexican *mestizo* hometown associations analyses gender and its interactions with transnational organisations. Goldring detects that although these associations encourage women’s participation, the leadership and decision making positions are still very male dominated, leaving women as adornments, nurturers, and perhaps passive recipients of the hometown association policies, but not as proactive agents. As a consequence, women are more likely to participate in issues and in locations that bear a more direct relationship to their particular identities - as women, mothers, workers, and so forth. A similar situation was observed in Quialanense hometown associations. While attending meetings of three different hometown associations, I observed that all of them are run by male leaders and that levels of female participation varied.

Amigos del Universo has a special group dedicated to women’s issues which is organised by Patricia, one of the leaders’ wives¹⁴⁶. The women’s group meet after

¹⁴⁶ Patricia is not originally from Quialana, but by marrying a Quialanense she automatically “became” one.

the general meeting and primarily discuss issues related with their children's development in the US, occasionally also discussing affairs related to Quialana.

Patricia mentioned that for Quilanense women the most important role is still the role of mother but in a particular way: successful mothering in the indigenous diaspora is ensuring that all children have higher education. In Agarwal's (1994) framework, this action of self-sacrificing or putting the needs of others before their own can be seen as a way to claim bargaining power against their dominators (e.g. their husbands) (p. 58). Furthermore, this mothering role is taken to the public arena (hometown association), and in fact my observations reveal that women's role is focused on supporting hometown associations and they only express their opinion when asked. However, on the positive side the women's group in *Amigos del Universo* has provided social and economic support to their members (e.g. to find jobs, practice Spanish and English and to encourage them to try new activities).

In contrast, in *Jóvenes Unidos para Cristo* and in *Fundación Quialana*, women do not have a special group for themselves. Their roles are merely supportive and they are mainly in charge of the activities related to cooking. When I attended their meetings I noted that women were not only in charge of the kitchen but they were also the only members who used Zapotec when speaking in public. The male members used a mix of English, Spanish and Zapotec.

First generation and 1.5 generation¹⁴⁷ Quilanense-American women also participate in hometown associations, especially in *Amigos del Universo* which has a group orientated to young people. Danira is Pastor's daughter, one of the founders of the

¹⁴⁷ US term that refers to those who were brought to the US at a young age by their parents, first generation immigrants who often still have close ties to their home countries (New York Times, 2010).

hometown association, and is the leader of this group which has around fifteen young people with Quialana links. This group of youngsters rehearse dance choreographies every Thursday and Sunday and present them in different artistic festivals around Greater Los Angeles and Orange County. Danira is only seventeen years old and although she was not born in Quialana she describes herself as Zapotec: “[...] nobody can tell me that I am American because I am not, because in my veins runs Zapotec blood”. Danira is the main decision-maker within the young people’s group but before taking action she must consult the general group leaders.

One of the major events for young Quialanense women in the US is the so-called Miss Quialana US, which convenes women up to 21 years old with Quialana links (1.5 or second generation immigrants) to represent their community in the migrant community. Notwithstanding that female participation was visible, the activities performed still reinforce women’s reproductive role and identity (Goldrin 2001).

Photo 15 Miss Quialana US beauty Pageant 2010



Photo taken by Felipe Matias

Because Cacaloxtepec migrants have not been able to organize a home town association in the US due to their dispersed patterns of migration, women have not been involved in any political or organizational activity. However Mixtec migrants and indigenous migrants from Oaxaca in general are represented and supported by the Binational Center for the Development of Oaxacan Indigenous Communities (FIOB). In my meeting with one of the main organizers of this centre, Olivia, she claimed that

Women from Oaxaca [in the US] are progressing because they are trying to get involved in the civic activities of their communities, at least as helpers. It is better than before; previously they could not even attend a community assembly. In parties they are now part of the welcoming team, before it was not possible.

Other Mixtec women living in the US have also established charity organisations to help disabled children in their communities of origin.

In Olivia's statement: "it is better than before [...] before it was not possible" it can be seen that women themselves are seeing *changes* in practices that used to be restricted to them (i.e. attend a general assembly), and that their status is undergoing a series of transformations. They might still be quite far from gender equality, but there is in an ongoing positive process towards greater bargaining power.

As Agarwal (1994) argues, the State, the community, the market and the household are interacting arenas that construct, maintain and challenge gender relations. At the same time, gendered bargaining power at the household level is reflected in the public arena and vice versa. Indigenous women in the US do not escape from this arrangement. It was very difficult for me to observe whether gender relations within the migrant households in the US were different from the ones practiced in the indigenous communities, but I am able to draw some conclusions. Among

Quialanense it is common that both partners work outside the home, and furthermore most of them have two jobs. As a consequence men and women do not have much time together or with their children. Activities have to be divided and men and women both partake in activities that were previously performed by the other partner. Moreover it can be said that Quialanense men in the US lose the monopoly they once enjoyed over family resources and activities. Men enjoy less personal autonomy - they need to do the laundry and cook - and in comparison with the power they had in their villages, men might exercise less authority over family members.

The great majority of Quialanense females learnt to drive in the US and did so even though they do not have a legal [*sic*] driving license. For some women, being able to drive is a trivial step in their lives but for Quialanense women it is much more. Driving offers them physical mobility but also symbolic autonomy. Zentgraft (2002), in her research on Salvadorian migrants in the US, confirms this observation. In the case of Salvadorian women migrants, driving represented a step forward in their liberation and a signal that things were changing within their household relationships. For Quialanense women it is the same.

Compared with indigenous women, men in the US still have more status and are more mobile, but men have new constraints placed on their spatial mobility and as a consequence they lose (bargaining) power in the public arena (see Manjarrez Rosas 2010). As indigenous men lose their supremacy in the public arena, they also lose some of their power and status within the family. In terms of Agarwal's framework, this represents an increase in women's bargaining power and as a consequence a change in gender relations.

6.6 “Now we are allowed to participate but...”

Although more indigenous women are now involved or “encouraged” to be involved in the administrative and political life of their communities, things have not been easy for many of them. They not only face difficulties or criticism within their families (parents, partners or children) but they are also confronted with unfavourable “opinions” from their colleagues, the general public and Cacaleño and Quialanense transmigrants. In contrast, some indigenous women have been supported by men who believe that women’s participation is fair and valid.

As previously described, the majority of Quialanense women who are actively involved in the civic and political activities of the town belong to the 25-49 years old group. At the time of the fieldwork the great majority of Quialanense women participating were involved in specific civic committees (mainly school committees) which reinforce their reproductive status. But because being part of a committee is seen as a civic obligation within the *cargo* system, women are expected to participate and as a consequence are not judged or criticized by other members of their families and community for doing so. However their participation might bring some complaints due to the time spent, especially when these activities conflict with their household chores.

No because he [husband] gets angry, because almost every day we [committee members] go out [travel to Oaxaca City], but I prepare his food and everything for him before I leave the house, but I guess he got used to us being together at lunch time. [...] but he says that I am not doing my work. I do my cargo [position] because of the people [of Quialana], when I come very early to sell milk ahhh he gets very grumpy. He says “look, you are leaving very early and you don’t even take care of me!” (Maria)

In Maria’s case, although her husband does not forbid her to fulfil her cargo, he seems to believe that Maria’s committee responsibilities should not disrupt her

responsibilities as housewife. However, Maria has learnt to manage the situation and even confronts her husband: “What do you want? I do your laundry, I make your bed”. Hence, in terms of Argawal’s framework, Maria holds a conflict relationship with her husband but at the same time she is constantly increasing her bargaining power at the household level through “voice dissent”. Nonetheless there are cases like Paulina whose husband, Valentín, fully supports and even advocates for her when he believes that the local government or some other member of the community has been unfair towards her.

Paulina, also part of the 25-49 year old group, is in charge of the elderly people committee and, despite the difficulties that she has faced with her current *cargo*, Paulina is recognized by the community in general for her confidence and disposition to work for the community. In the past local general elections (October 2010) Quialanense inhabitants even considered her for the municipal president position. While Paulina is supported by her husband and some members of the community, she has been strongly criticized by her brother and a group of 50 plus women who believe that she spends “too much time on the streets doing nothing”. Paulina’s example shows how while she manages a relationship of cooperation at the household level (with her husband) she still encounters Quialana’s “doxa” which dictates that women’s place should be restrained to the private arena.

Guadalupe, the first female officer in the town, did not receive any proper support from her family but at the same time her family did not act against her involvement in the political life of the community. When Guadalupe was elected as health officer, another woman, Norma, was appointed as her substitute. The appointed substitute accepted the *cargo* but a few weeks later she quit her position arguing that

her husband did not allow her to participate. Norma argued that she was not welcomed in the cabinet as a married woman - a situation that did not happen with Guadalupe because she is single - and that she felt rejected by the municipal president and the other male members of the cabinet. However, further in our conversation she argued that the main reason for quitting her position was her husband and her extended family as they did not approve of the fact that she, as a married woman, would be all the time around outside her home and surrounded by men. Norma's case suggests how women's sexuality and fertility is controlled by the family and by tradition. Later on, when I asked the municipal president about Norma's situation he claimed: "you see? Even though I want women to be involved [in the political life of the town] ... but women themselves do not decide [to participate], what can I do". Note that the municipal president did not mention the unwelcome attitude that the male officer had towards Norma but justified the situation by blaming women.

Even Quialanese single women (mainly within the 17-24 age group) have to cope with adversities within their families. Claudia, the current municipal secretary, was appointed by the municipal president for her academic achievements (she finished A-levels equivalent) but her parents complain because they believe that Claudia jeopardizes her status of "decent woman" by having too much contact with the opposite sex:

Ehhh for my mum, for my mum and my dad, I had to be honest, they were not very happy and they are still not happy [...] nowadays well I am almost never at home and of course they are not very happy. But I think they are getting used to it, little by little. Regarding the fact that I spend most of my day with men, well they are also uncomfortable with that situation, because you know here [in Quialana], it is not very common for a woman to relate with men. People do not see that as normal [...] well my father has always told me that I should not relax my behaviour when I am around men, because

my father has told me that if you treat a man with a lot of familiarity, well, I do not know, they can disrespect you.

In order to compensate for her absence and gossip about the ‘morality’ of her family, Claudia gives her entire salary to her parents who administrate and, according to Claudia, save it. Claudia receives from her own salary only pocket money for her everyday expenses.

Even when women are elected in feminised positions seen by the community as an “adequate” place for women, they can face opposition, as the case of Marlene, the local Catholic Church coordinator exemplifies:

And well, sometimes, when I have to go out [...] my mum gets a bit upset, but she understands me, she understands. [...] My mum says that when I go out she has to stay at home and do everything herself and she says she needs me [with the household chores].

The previous examples suggest that opposition and criticism towards women who participate in public activities work as barriers to further participation in any sphere of the community. Note that the barriers are established by both men and women.

I also asked transmigrants currently living in the US for their opinion about the greater incorporation of women in the public arena of Quialana. What I found striking is that most Quialanense men and women knew that indigenous women were actively participating in the school committees, but not that for very first time Quialana had a female officer or a female police officer.

The situation of Cacaleño women participating in the public arena is very similar to that in Quialana. Although they have managed to break down stereotypes that previously limited their participation, they still face hurdles that not only question them, as women, but also their partners and family. For about a week I worked with the cabinet in community activities (*tequio*) that included the maintenance and repair

of the water tanks. For maintaining and repairing the water tanks all the officers and administrative staff, men and women, were working equally but activities that required technical knowledge or strength were done by male officers. Moreover, during the lunch break only the female officers heated and served the food. Men were only standing around waiting to be served, and the same situation happened in other community activities. I asked Rosa Elia, the officer who brought food, whether she was appointed by the municipal president to bring food and cook for the rest of the cabinet; she answered: “no, but I am the only woman in the cabinet and it is my responsibility, I feel it is my responsibility”. So, Rosa Elia both assumes this responsibility and is assumed by others to have it.

Rosa Elia also mentioned the strong criticism that she, and her husband, have received since she was elected as officer. Rosa Elia is criticised for having a life outside home but at the same time her husband’s masculinity and leadership is questioned. In order to redress her critics she tends to involve her husband most of the time in the government activities; Rosa Elia makes him “visible”.

Hilda, the current treasurer, is a widow but said she had to ask permission from her children when the government appointed her as treasurer. Moreover Hilda decided to bring her current partner to live with her “to stop the gossip that I am a lonely woman and to feel a bit more protected”. Hilda has found her work in the local government very difficult due to the “macho” attitude that male officers have shown towards Cacaleño women in the cabinet: “To us...women, they [male officers] tell us “you go and do that because here I am the one who gives orders, because I am an officer, I command and you are only an employee [administrative staff] and you have to obey me””.

Hilda is not the only woman who complains about the treatment received from male colleagues. In fact all Cacaleño women working in the government have had problems working with men. This situation has made three of them think about resigning their post and to affirm that “they will never ever get involved in politics again” (Fabiola). When I asked male officers and the PAN party leader about women’s complaints they argued that the problem was that “men in the town were not used to work with women” (Leonardo). Some others mentioned women’s lack of experience.

While male officers argue that women working in the government do not have the required knowledge and the experience, Cacaleño women, at the same time, complain that “there are men within the government who do not like the idea of me going to tell them what to do” (Carla), and men still see them as “easy women” who are prey to harrassment and sexual harrassment.

I also talked with elderly men (around their 70s) who worked as officers or employees when Cacaloxtepec was ruled under customary law and when women were not, under any circumstances, allowed to participate in the political and civic arena. Many elders were totally against the current federal and local politics that included women’s participation. Alfredo, a former municipal president, clearly states his discontent and blames the local government for such a change: “I do not like it [females working at the local government]. This is men’s stuff! Men should be the only ones involved in politics and public spaces”.

Cacaleño women working in the civic and political arena not only have to deal with men’s opposition or harassment, they also deal with criticism from other women. Martha, the former municipal secretary, was said to be surprised during her party

(PRI) local election when she realised that an important number of PRI members were supporting her for an officer position. However she decided not to accept the position because her *comadre* (best friend) reminded Martha that her husband would disagree with such a position.

The examples above show how indigenous women in Quialana and Cacaloxtepc who have or are currently working in the political and civic arena face great difficulties. Despite the gender progressive reforms that the local and federal government have implemented in both communities, the majority of Quialanense and Cacaleño men and women are still finding it difficult to see women in activities which were previously reserved exclusively for men. First women in both communities need to cope with restrictions and opposition at the household level, and then face the public arena where they are called “women of the street” or “women who do not have anything to do at their house”.

If we analyse the examples and following Agarwal’s (1994) and Kabeer’s (2001) theoretical frameworks, it can be suggested that the internalisation of indigenous women’s lower status (*doxa*) makes women judge and question other indigenous women who do not conform to the local “traditional” and “accepted” standards of being a woman. Both Agarwal and Kabeer stress that collective action is necessary to transform gender relations in the public arena, but in Quialana and Cacaloxtepc collective female action is still weak and on some occasions women themselves are the barriers.

Moreover, the examples presented not only showed indigenous men’s perspectives and opinions towards women’s participation in the public arena but also hinted at expressions of threatened masculinities. Suddenly, indigenous men feel their

domains invaded by those who used to be submissive and dominated; a situation that challenges and, in a sense, transforms local hegemonic masculinities. Nowadays indigenous men have to learn how to share the space that once used to be exclusively masculinised. Although gender progressive policies introduced by the Mexican federal state and transnational migration have driven the re-configuration of the private and public arenas, it is possible to observe that indigenous women (mainly in the 50 plus group) seem to be particularly threatened by the wave of “changes” that both communities are experiencing. If women get more involved in non-traditional activities (i.e. politics and education), then the older generation feels that they are losing the labour and power over the younger generation.

6.7 Conclusion: Can we talk about a re-construction of gender relations?

As this chapter has shown, modest but important changes have been observed in the gender relations of both indigenous communities and in the US diaspora. According to the empirical evidence, migration has played an important role in these changes. However transnational migration does not write the entire script. Using Agarwal’s (1994) framework of analysis of gender relations this chapter has analysed the changes in women’s bargaining power in the private (household) and public (market, community and State) arenas. By recognising that the private and public arenas are constantly interlinked I have brought to the fore the experiences of Cacaleño and Quialanense women in three main age groups. Dividing women in three main age groups has allowed me to identify that generational differences matter when analysing gender relations. It would be easy to make the mistake of generalising about indigenous women without taking into consideration the historical, social, internal and external factors that differentiate them, as well as their different locations. For instance, 50 plus Quialanense women are observed to have a

little more bargaining power than Cacaleño even when a good number of 50 plus Cacaleño are circular migrants. It has also been observed that for 50 plus Quialanense and Cacaleño women conservative traditions and customs lie behind their relatively poor public and private bargaining power.

In the case of the 25-49 age group, a greater participation in the market and community arena was detected. Some of the changes have been induced by male migration but many of the gender progressive ideas have come through the federal Mexican State, which in the last decade has deployed policies on gender equality. An important number of Quialanense women in this age group have had experience with migration and a visible participation in the market arena, which has allowed them to question their intra-household relationship and to obtain greater experience from outside their communities. The case of Cacaleño is different, due to the fact that most of them leave their community to work as maids in urban Mexico; changes in gender relations were more difficult to identify and it was even more difficult to evaluate the role played by migration in this area. More women in this age group obtain an income but this analysis has followed Agarwal's model and has questioned the kind of income they obtain, for how long and whether their jobs have actually become a window of opportunity or in fact reinforced women's reproductive roles.

The local State and the community have taken an important role by "allowing" women to actively participate (e.g. voting, as committee members, officers) in the political life of the communities. Here is where migration has perhaps impacted the most. The lack of suitable male members has encouraged reformulating of community rules and traditions and normalising of the presence of women in public space. Some research (see Juan Martínez 2013) has considered this not to be real

participation but only a “borrowed” way of performing citizenship. Whether or not that is the case, I argue that “borrowed” citizenship translates into experience for women in matters where they were not previously included.

The 17-24 year olds would be an interesting group to follow in further research. This group of women are the ones who have enjoyed the benefits of the monetary remittances of migration but at the same time they have also been strongly impacted by the “emotional costs of migration” (Zafra and Juan Martínez 2010). Because of monetary remittances these women have obtained what previous generations lack: education and skills to cope with the *outside* world. Many of them have taken advantage of this and pursued university education. Here it is important to highlight that Quialanense women present more important development than Cacaleño. However, custom and tradition still play an important role because this new range of opportunities benefit only those who are single.

Finally indigenous women in the US at first sight might seem to enjoy greater bargaining power than their counterparts in the villages. And in fact they do, but we should analyse this re-construction of gender relations with caution. Indigenous women in the US are in a different environment and those who apply the rules and customs that used to seclude them in their communities of origin are not physically present. These rules might still exist due to migrant networks and the transnational communication between the villages, however the community is not physically there to judge and constrain them. Their partners, because of the requirements that life in the US demands, at the same time have also lost symbolic power in the household arena, a situation that is a reflection of the low status that indigenous Mexican immigrants have in the US’s ethnically segregated society (Ramirez 2011). In terms

of the public arena, it was observed that women belong and participate in hometown associations but they are still confined to the reproductive arena or treated as adornment. It would be interesting in the future to closely observe the 1.5 and second generation of Quialanense and Cacaleño in the US and see how the gender structures play out in their lives.

The following chapter will finish answering the second research question of this thesis by scrutinizing the role of transnational migration in the re-construction of indigenous masculinities and feminities.

Chapter 7. Reconstructing indigenous masculinities and femininities

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on analysing the role played by transnational migration (mainly of men) in changing gender relations in Cacaloxtotec, Quialana, and in the indigenous diaspora in the US. To analyse this, Agarwal's framework was used as a theoretical tool which allows us to assess the changes, if any, in gender relations in the interrelated private and public arenas. This chapter continues answering the second research question by focusing on the impact of transnational migration on gender identities. As Connell (2009 p. 73, 107) states, to talk about gender identity(ies) is to talk about women's and men's 'involvement' in gender relations. How men and women understand themselves as male or female is central to understand social interactions. Thus, in a dialectic process, if gender identities are re-constructed, then gender relations are also re-shaped and vice versa (Amuchástegui and Szasz 2007).

This chapter also contributes to the rather unexplored area of indigenous masculinities and femininities. While important work has been done on the study of masculinities and their relation with Mexico-US migration (see Alcalde 2011, Ramirez 2011, Rosas 2007), there are no studies to date which analyse Mexican indigenous people's gender identities. In this light, this chapter examines how migration and the associated changes in the private and public arena have also impacted on the conception and performance of masculinity and femininity in both indigenous communities.

Before the present high levels of migration, dominant Cacaleño and Quialanense masculinity was based on power arrangements privileging elderly-wisdom. However the particular trajectory of the migratory phenomenon has started to give way to forms of masculinity represented by the "brave" and experienced migrant. I use the

phrase *elders' wisdom* (Carton 2001) to refer to the expression of masculinity that, due to the political economy of indigenous towns, is based on “customary respect”, years of service to the community, honour and prestige. Furthermore the term *brave migrant* makes reference to the archetype that indigenous Mexican migrants construct through work experiences and community based interactions in the US.

In terms of femininity, Cacaleño and Quialanense femininities are shifting, enabling some women to become key actors within their community. Cacaleño and Quialanense traditional femininity was, and still is, depicted by a submissive, quiet, diligent, docile and obedient woman, but transnational migration, among other forces, has certainly influenced the performance of femininity.

Last but not least, this chapter also explore how a current external phenomenon might be working against the modest transformation already observed: that of religion. New ways of practicing religion and a new wave of religious traditions might be, again, re-composing ‘traditional’ forms of both masculinity and femininity.

7.2 From elders' wisdom to brave migrants

In Cacaloxtepec and in Quialana before high levels of migration, hegemonic masculinity – elders' wisdom masculinity - was represented by a married, heterosexual, Catholic man who worked hard in the fields to feed his family. In most cases he was a physically present head of the household, participated in the customary law and *cargo* system of his community, and publicly proved his virility by controlling his wife and female members of the family, by having many children and by consuming high quantities of alcohol (see de Keijzer and Rodríguez 2007; Pérez Castro Vazquez n/d). In addition, as the term elders' wisdom (Carton 2001), suggests, Cacaleño and Quialanense men tended to acquire respect with age and

through their civil status¹⁴⁸. At the ceremonial level Cacaleño and Quialanense men reaffirmed their masculinity by contributing economically to the annual patron saint festivities - and *cofradías* in the case of Cacaloxtepec - regardless of their economic constraints. Hence, elders' wisdom masculinity was based around what Jeffrey Cohen (1999) called cooperation structures of indigenous communities. Those community-based cooperation structures start at the level of the household with the figures of *compadrazgo* and *guelaguetza*, or mutual cooperation (see Chapter 4 for more detail) in the Cacaloxtepec case.

Compadrazgo, *guelaguetza* and mutual cooperation relationships influence the position and status one holds in the community hierarchy (see Cohen 1999), and although the entire family participates in these activities, the prestige is bestowed on the male head of the household. No Cacaleño and Quialanense can move up the status hierarchy if he ignores any facet of these systems. Another important aspect in the construction of elders' wisdom masculinity is the community-government participation better known as *cargos* (Kearney and Besserer 2004). Cacaloxtepec and Quialana are no exception to the rule and men are encouraged to participate in the political, civic and religious affairs of the town. As previously mentioned in Chapter 4, in the past¹⁴⁹ those appointed did not receive a salary; indeed, they interrupted their income-generating activities in order to fulfil their service. By tradition offices were filled by venerable men who have earned previous experience in community *cargo* activities such as: police officer (*topil*), altar boy (*monaguillo*) and bell ringer (*campanero*) at the Catholic Church, and as committee members

¹⁴⁸ This "age-civil status hierarchy" is still reflected in the local Zapotec language, which differentiates a young single man, by using the word "Che", from an older married man, when the word is "Tiu".

¹⁴⁹ No more than twenty years ago in both communities. However in Santiago Cacaloxtepec those appointed were partially sponsored by the political party in power.

(Korsbaek 2002; Torres Cisneros 2002). Thus, hegemonic masculinity was perpetuated and performed by the man, who apart from being a responsible and domineering head of family, was also participating in and collaborating with the civil and ceremonial life of his community. This kind of masculinity was nurtured by male and female members of the family by preferring male children to female. Having sons not only confirmed male virility; mothers knew that by giving birth to sons they would confirm their position as suitable wives and daughters-in-law and provide the community with potential civic/community servers and workers. Subordinated masculinities at that time were represented by teenagers, unmarried men or by married men who avoided participation in the civil and ceremonial life of the town.

At any given time one practice of masculinity can be culturally exalted over others (Connell 2002). In Cacaloxtotec and in Quialana elders' wisdom masculinity has given way to the newly constructed masculinity of the brave migrant. Although out-migration has not been the only catalyst in the transformation of hegemonic masculinity, this phenomenon has played an important role. Due to economic circumstances, Quialanense and Cacaleño men started to migrate and with their experiences the performance of masculinity started to undergo important modifications. An important role was also played by the shift in the type of labour performed by transnational migrants. Pioneering Quialanense and Cacaleño migrants worked in the agricultural fields within Mexico and when they "crossed" the border most of them also engaged in the agricultural fields of north-western Mexico, California and Florida, where they had very little contact with US society or even with other Mexican *mestizo* migrants (see also Hulshof 1991 and Velasco Ortiz 2005). Additionally, the relative "easiness" in crossing the Mexico-US border

at that time and the temporal character of agricultural work allowed migrants to return and circulate to and from their communities of origin more frequently (Cornelius 2007, París 2008). As in many other communities in Mexico, in the last decade male migration in Cacaloxtotec and Quialana towards the US and urban areas of Mexico is assumed, creating a “culture of migration” (Cohen 2004). At some point in their lives Cacaleño and Quialanense men are expected to work outside their communities because migrating is a step towards manhood (Rosas 2007). In fact, to migrate means doing what other men in the town are doing: to fulfil a public commitment.

In the US Cacaleño and Quialanense men find themselves, again, in a socially and ethnically disadvantaged position; they are Mexicans, they are indigenous and they are, most often, undocumented. “Here we are like slaves, we leave our houses at six in the morning and come back at six in the afternoon, here we even collect dog’s poop” (Mauricio). Cristina Alcalde (2011), in her study of Latinos in Kentucky, describes how Mexicans and Central Americans feel vulnerable due to the hostility, exploitation and discrimination they face while working or doing everyday errands (p. 457). Given this context Alcalde argues that the only space in which Latino men can perform their masculinity is in their skills of being hard workers, in the use of their physical strength and in their roles as transnational bread winners (see also Ramirez 2011). However, Alcalde (2011) and Ramirez (2011) note that migrant workers are conscious that their source of masculinity - hard work - is a precarious one because they know that their employers can lay them off at any moment.

The theoretical implications presented in Ramirez’s (2011) and Alcalde’s (2011) research are also applicable to Cacaleño and Quialanense migrants in the US. For Quialanense men, the kinds of jobs that they “choose” take them to one area or

another; those who establish themselves in Anaheim work as gardeners, and those in Greater Los Angeles as dishwashers, cooks and waiters (restaurant industry). Because the gendered work environment plays an important role in men's ongoing construction of masculinity, Quialanense migrants who work in the occupation of gardening might construct a different masculinity to those who work in the restaurant industry. For instance, a gardener might construct a masculinity based on his physical strength and muscles, whereas the masculinity of the one who works in a restaurant might involve enhance skills and abilities such as practicing English or knowing about international food.

For Cacaleño men the picture is very different. The most popular occupations among those working on the outskirts of Mexico City are cleaning shoes and selling in the street. In Mexico, the occupation of shoe-cleaner is dominated by men and considered masculine because it "requires getting dirty" and spending a good part of the day on the street. In addition, the nature of the job might be interpreted as reproducing ethnic and class inequalities in the country: the client sits in a high chair and the shoe-cleaner kneels to clean the client's shoes. Cacaleño street petty sellers sell a wide range of products; however most of the sellers are irregular or so-called ambulant sellers. They do not have a government permit to sell their products on the streets, which makes them subjects of bribery and corruption by the police. There are also cases of Cacaleño men working in established businesses or in office jobs, but these are exceptions rather than the rule.

In the US Cacaleño tend to use their sales expertise - obtained in urban Mexico - to find jobs in the informal service sector. The group of Cacaleño men I followed in the US work selling iced-lollies during summer and Mexican style snacks during winter. Only in specific circumstances - such as requiring more money - do Cacaleño men

work in seasonal food packing companies. It is important to note that the occupation of street seller in the US is seen as “masculine” because undocumented migrants require courage to face the dangers of the street (i.e. being caught by the ICE¹⁵⁰), all weather conditions and the unreliability of the work.

Ayala Carrillo (2007) states that the idea of masculinity means different things to different people in different time frames and circumstances; and this is confirmed in the case of Cacaleño and Quialanense men who within the US context occupy subordinated masculinities, but within their group they understand themselves to be ‘real men’ because of their work.

Apart from the work environment, indigenous Cacaleño and Quialanense masculinity in the US is also crafted by the kind of organisation that migrants frequent in their free time. Quialanense meet in two main kinds of organisations: religious and civic-ceremonial. Those who are regular members attending religious organisations¹⁵¹ have created a different perception of themselves as men than those who are members of civic-ceremonial organisations. While attending the meetings of the Catholic Quialanense *Jóvenes Unidos para Cristo* in Anaheim California I observed that most of the men are married, work as gardeners and live mainly among their *paisanos*. Moreover, members of *Jóvenes Unidos para Cristo* still see themselves as heads of the family despite the distance:

[i]t is like you were there [Quialana] because we have to send money for all the expenses. They phone you [family] and ask you for money to cover household expenses, it is like when I was living there. But the love... we cannot give it, and it is very difficult [Manuel’s face expresses sadness] for us to be away from our family. (Manuel)

¹⁵⁰ US Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE).

¹⁵¹ See chapter 5.

In contrast Quialanense who are recurrent members of the civic-ceremonial organisation *Amigos del Universo* are on average younger, have a pretty good knowledge of English and, although undocumented, a good number of them are in the US with their families¹⁵². Whereas in *Jóvenes Unidos para Cristo* the village traditions (such as early marriage) and customs are not challenged or questioned, *Amigos del Universo*'s meetings include discussion about how aspects of US culture can be incorporated into Zapotec culture (for instance: the importance of formal education, family planning strategies and gender equality). Thus, *Jóvenes Unidos para Cristo* and *Amigos del Universo* gatherings highlight how masculinities in the US can be crafted in a different way among migrants from the same village: *Jóvenes Unidos para Cristo* confirms the male as a breadwinner and head of the household, *Amigos del Universo* comprises men who tend to be open to opportunities and gender equality.

In contrast, crafting masculinity through migrant organisations does not apply in the same way to Cacaleño migrants who have not yet funded any civic or religious organisation in their communities of destination (more details in chapter 5).

Another important aspect that we should take into consideration is peer interaction outside community based organisations. As mentioned earlier, Cacaleño and Quialanense solo-male migrants live among *paisanos* or other fellow migrants in the US and have to carry out household chores themselves (e.g. laundry, cooking, cleaning), non-normative activities that are related with the feminine world. At the same time, in the struggle to cope with boredom, alienation or despair, Cacaleño and Quialanense solo-migrants engage in heavy drinking and use pornography, activities

¹⁵² Members of *Amigos del Universo* also cooperate financially for infrastructure improvements in San Bartolomé Quialana but their main mission is to promote further education and employment skills among Quialanense migrants who already live in the US.

that can also be seen as ways to reaffirm their masculinity. In 1988 Jaime arrived in East Los Angeles with his *paisanos* to discover a flat full of beer and pornography. When asked what he saw he replied: “[b]eer, just beer, and I was so sad to see that [Quialanense] men that came here do the same. It is like a rule: drink beer, talk about women, watch pornography and work with Chinese people [in restaurants]”. Juventino, a Cacaleño migrant working in Stockton, California, stated with a cynical smile that “the most important thing that I have learnt in the US is to become a *borracho* [drunk person]”. When Cacaleño and Quialanense migrants come back to their community of origin, the experiences encountered in the US and in urban areas of Mexico play an important role in the ways in which men understand their masculinity. Once back in Cacaloxtepec and Quialana men are no longer living a clandestine life, neither are they the subjects of discrimination by the US society and by other Mexican *mestizo* immigrants/nationals. Furthermore, they are no longer located at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. Thus, returnees and circular migrants find a place, in their communities of origin, where their masculinity is not subordinated.

The masculinity performed by returnees or circular migrants is based on the social, economic and human “success” that they (supposedly) obtained in the US and urban Mexico and in the risk faced by crossing the border or leaving their communities (Rosas 2007). Burin and Meler (2000) argue that generation of money becomes an essential component in the configuration of masculinity. Being economically self-sufficient is a powerful masculine emblem, and masculinity is measured largely according to the money generated. Economic success is rather visible among Cacaleño and Quialanense returnees. Most of them were able to send enough money for the construction of a house and were able to purchase additional pieces of land to

cultivate or re-sell. Some of them established businesses (like the current taxi service or the first mini-market in the community), and others were able to support their children to further their education.

After coming back from *el norte* Cacaleño and Quialanense men behave differently. First of all, most of them come back in pick-up trucks or sports cars which are driven around the unpaved roads of the villages with loud *norteña* (from the north) music and US number plates. They also dress differently; the use of sandals and hats is replaced by closed shoes or branded trainers and baseball caps. Tattoos are also another way of showing that they have been in the US. All the returnees and circular migrants whom I met in Quialana, and a good number of them in Cacaloxtepec, had tattooed their bodies as a memento of their time in *el norte*. Language has also been affected by migratory experiences. Now it is common to hear a mix of Zapotec/Mixtec, Spanish and English when they speak and in some cases young returnees use English to converse with other former migrants. The greater the demonstration of material, social and human success in the community is, the greater the possibility to be seen as ‘a real man’ and as a ‘model husband, son, brother and father’.

On one occasion I accompanied a group of Quialanense who took a young girl to have a medical check at the nearest city hospital. While waiting for the young girl I had a conversation with two returnees; they were interested in my research and they knew that I had been travelling around California meeting their *paisanos*. Suddenly our conversation turned into a boasting competition to impress each other and show off the places they had visited in the US and the work experience they had obtained.

I travelled everywhere [in the US]! I know the entire state of California, Washington, Seattle... everywhere. (Mundo)

Yes! The coffee shop called Yom Yom is in a corner [in Anaheim], opposite it there is a petrol station and next to it there is an Eco-shop [corner shop] and behind the petrol station there is a launderette and a supermarket. I remember very well. (Mario)

The same situation happened with a couple of Cacaleño returnees who, at every opportunity tried to speak with me in English, especially when there were more people around them.

Furthermore, the brave migrant masculinity seems to be more attractive to young Cacaleño and Quialanense women, who tend to prefer men with migrant experience as potential husbands. During casual conversations with young single Cacaleño and Quialanense I realised that the more popular single men were those who have been migrants, are in the US or “in the city” (Mexico City). The young girls refer to them as “more modern” and with “more future” because of their migratory experience.

The brave migrant style of masculinity is seen as aspirational for those men who are still very young to migrate and for the few of them who have not migrated. This is mainly reflected in the way of dressing, the style of music, the way of expressing themselves and in the kind of hope and desire they manifest. Returnees, circular migrants and current immigrants are seen as “*bien chingones*” (really awesome) as those who have been brave enough to travel outside the community, crossed a dangerous border and found a job which has given their relatives unthinkable opportunities¹⁵³.

¹⁵³ In rural Mexico along with the successful migrant who risked his life to reach “the other side”, the drug dealer (narco) presents a new image of successful masculinity regardless of its usually short-lived status and the risk of prison (see Valdez Cardenas 2011).

7.2.1 Versions and Derivatives of Brave Migrant Masculinity in the indigenous communities

- **San Bartolomé Quialana**

Three other counter-constructed styles of masculinities are performed by Quialanense men. These other ways of understanding and performing masculinity have also been strongly influenced by the social remittances sent by Quialanense migrants in the US.

The first one is a variation of the brave migrant masculinity and it is performed by *los pelones* (the skinheads). *Los pelones* are returnees or deported men who spent an important number of years in the US and belonged - or were involved in one sense or another - to the famous gangs of Los Angeles, such as the “18th Street Gang”, or the “MS-13” (*Maras Salvatrucha*). These men came back and brought the gang culture to the town and after six o’clock they meet in the central street of Quialana to hang around and listen to loud music. *Los pelones* have become a problematic group of young men for the community; they have painted the town’s walls with graffiti logos of Los Angeles gangs and have made drugs more easily available to the rest of the inhabitants. Their dress code depicts very much the attire used by gang members in the US. They dress like *cholos*: wide loose jeans, oversized shirts, branded trainers, baseball caps, big gold chains, visible tattoos and shaved heads.

The second kind of alternative masculinity is the *born-again or evangelical Christian masculinity*. Due to the establishment of non-Catholic churches (Evangelic, Mormons, Messianic, Jehovah’s Witnesses) by Quialanense transnational migrants and returnees, and more diverse faith-practices within the Catholic Church (exported too by migrants in the US), some men have found alternative ways to express their masculinity.

Photo 16 *Pelones* having lunch at a food stand in San Bartolomé Quialana



Photo taken by the author.

The evangelical Christian man in Quialana focuses his entire life on venerating and loving God, which as a consequence requires a specific kind of behaviour: he does not consume alcohol or drugs, or beat his wife and he takes his wife's opinions into account. Evangelical Christian men participate in community affairs but do not tend to get involved with practices that venerate Catholic saints, such as community festivals. For instance a non-Catholic man would never take the position of *alcalde* (major) in the community. In addition, some of them have ceased to migrate because leaving behind their families is seen as a sin.

Rodrigo, a returnee, worked for more than eight years in greater Los Angeles and during that time he converted to Pentecostal Christianity. Before joining the Pentecostal Church, Rodrigo left his wife Ernestina in Quialana, used to drink a lot

of alcohol and accepts that he beat Ernestina on several occasions. Before his last trip to California, Rodrigo had the opportunity to regularise his working permit through one of his employers but he refused this prospect because he wanted to come back to his town to spread the Gospel. Currently, apart from cultivating his piece of land, Rodrigo is one of the elders of the evangelical church in Quialana; he is also an evangelizer in neighbouring towns and twice a week he helps his wife to sell their harvest in Tlacolula market. He is the only Quialanense man who sells in the market and a return to the US does not figure in his plans.

The third newly constructed kind of masculinity is performed by young Quialanense men who have decided not to migrate but to pursue a university degree: *the male university student*. This kind of masculinity is important because this is the first generation of Quialanense men with university degrees. Four young men are currently enrolled at private universities in Oaxaca City and one more attends a public university¹⁵⁴. Their tuition fees are covered by monetary remittances sent by the “brave migrants” who work in the US. Two of these men worked at the municipal government: Miguel is the ecology officer and Hector is the treasurer. Although the university students are respected due to their educational achievements, senior men question their choices and question them for “still studying and not getting a real job”. Oscar “the future architect”, as he called himself, recounts what people in Quialana think about what he does:

Well knowing how people are in the town... it is very difficult to deal with the people from here, they say ‘why do we need an architect if we can do everything he says he can by ourselves?!’

¹⁵⁴ Oscar and Hector are studying architecture, Nicolas reads business administration, Rafael is trying to become a primary school teacher and Miguel was finishing an MA in governmental administration.

Oscar's father, Diego, a returnee, is also criticised by his friends about what his son does and sometimes he even questions Oscar's studies:

He says he studies, this is the only thing he does, even on Saturdays. People ask me 'hey, is not your son going to US? He is already a grown-up man, isn't he?' Maybe he is not actually studying. Maybe he only goes to Oaxaca City to spend time with his friends.

By telling me what his friends thought about his son, I believe Diego was trying to find comfort and reassurance about his son's choices. He knew I had been a student for a long time and the fact that he "confessed" his feelings not only shows the pressure that exists in Quialana to perform a specific kind of masculinity - in this case the brave migrant - but also that he was trying to find explanations about the option, studying, that his son has chosen to do. For Diego, a man who does not use his hands but his brain and pursues a university degree is still atypical.

- **Cacaloxtotec**

In Cacaloxtotec it was more difficult to identify derivatives of the brave migrant masculinity. I observed a more homogeneous masculinity among circular migrants and returnees; however I still could detect a different expression of masculinity among Cacaleño men: *the city slicker* men. "The rural country bumpkins soon become city slickers" is the phrase used by Cacaleño inhabitants when they describe returnees who after years of circular migration have adopted sophisticated manners related to urban areas. Men with migration experience tend to dress differently, like in Quialana, exchanging sandals and hats for trainers, jeans and baseball caps.

A *city slicker* man, when he comes back to the town for a celebration, would prefer to drink tequila or brandy instead of the local *aguardiente* liquor and when he is chosen to be a godparent, he takes his future godchildren and *compadres* all the way

to Mexico City to buy the trousseau. In Cacaloxtotec, *city slicker* men are seen to have greater knowledge and taste, and in general their opinion is highly valued and respected.

Notwithstanding this endorsement of status, *city slickers* can also be seen as ‘men with bad habits’ because many Cacaleño inhabitants still imagine urban areas as places where bad behaviours are learnt.

When these *cabrones* [bad boys] come back to the town [Cacaloxtotec] they turn the streets into a public pub. They do not respect! They still believe they are in the city or maybe they think because they come from the city they can do whatever they want here. You see them, especially in the annual festivity, drinking all night and organising fights. You see, they learnt all these things in the city. Most of them left the town as shy young men and they come back very *machos* and with an almighty attitude. (Jorge Luis and Santiago)

I had this conversation with Jorge Luis and Santiago, two Cacaleño elders who see these men as quite different from themselves when they were younger. It does not mean that when Jorge Luis and Santiago were younger they did not get drunk or fight on the streets. In fact they do not complain about that, but about the performers and the meaning of their actions. “They come back very *machos*”, in Jorge Luis’ and Santiago’s perception more *machos* than them, and “with an almighty attitude”, as if Jorge Luis and Santiago experience this attitude as threatening.

It is important to note that in Cacaloxtotec, *pelones*-type expressions of masculinity are not very common. Only a few circular US migrants dress like *cholos* but they have not yet become an aspirational model of masculinity among young men. Nor are new religions a feature. Cacaleño migrants within Mexico and in the US, even though they are in constant contact with other social groups, remain strongly, actively and traditionally Catholic. The relative proximity of migrant Cacaleño in Mexico City to their home town, the current low levels of migration to the US, as

well as the fact that Catholicism is linked to the rights and responsibilities of community citizenship, are some of the factors that have mitigated against the introduction of diverse faith practices and associated expressions of masculinity.

Connell (2002) argues that masculinity/ies is/are neither static nor timeless but defined and constructed by historic and social contexts. In Cacaloxtepec and Quialana, migration has been an important catalyst in the understanding and expression of masculinity. The brave migrant version of masculinity and its derivatives constitute different ways to perform masculinity. However those alternatives have not come without a cost because the importance of tradition and custom in the towns is directed by the elders' wisdom version of masculinity, and the elders are struggling to retain their social and symbolic power within the community.

7.2.2 Tension, clashes and conflict between elders' wisdom masculinity and brave migrant masculinity

Due to the political economy of the two towns, customary law and mixed practices, the previous hegemonic traditional masculinity represented by the elders' wisdom finds itself in conflict with that represented by brave migrants and with other ways of performing indigenous masculinity.

Traditionally in Mexican rural communities most males transit from childhood to manhood by getting married and through paternity. However today, a recent notion of "enjoying life" seems to be a new alternative to early marriage and responsibilities (de Keijzer and Rodríguez 2007). For many Cacaleño and Quialanense men migration represents the possibility to undergo experiences that are not accessible in the villages, such as to "go out with women", to "enjoy their youth", to "have fun" and to "obtain experience from life".

In his youth, Valentín, a 45 year old returnee, served as a *topil* (police officer) in Quialana for four years without receiving any payment. He recalls walking around the community in the middle of the night to watch for intruders with his other *topil* colleagues. Valentín and the others did not have uniforms and their only weapon was a machete, but they were fulfilling their responsibility as Quialanense. Nowadays, “things have changed”, says Valentín. He told me that on one occasion when he was very drunk, he went to the government officer to complain about the introduction of the police force in the town.

I went to shout to the mother fuckers... you know what? “you police officers should work” [...], he [police officer] just came back from California and he never gave his service [in the customary law system] and he just entered as a police officer. And I told him “Do you know that one should give service in the town? You as a *topil* [police officer], you should give service. Let me tell you how things work here, it is not like you just arrive [back from California] and become a police officer with a salary”. I have served my community, I have given service.

Moreover, Valentín argues that police officers are just pretenders that stand under a tree or stay inside the police car: “That is why I argued that one should be fair, every mother fucker who comes back [from the US] must give service: potable water committee, electricity committee, parents committee [...]”. In Valentín’s view the point could not be clearer: returnees are not fulfilling their duties to the traditional political organisation of the town and therefore in Valentín’s eyes they are weak, they are not real Quialanense men. This is further confirmed when Valentín uses the gender derogative term “mother fuckers” to describe the police officers. Notice how in Valentín’s narrative an activity that used to be seen as rather masculine (*topil* or currently police officer) is nowadays emasculated by the executor - the returnee - and not by the nature of the activity.

In fact, Valentín depicts the *fault line* and tensions between the masculinities developed in Quialana and he himself is caught between the two Quialanense masculinities competing to be hegemonic. Although he was a migrant in his youth and “enjoyed” the benefits of being outside his home town; he explored the mythical *el norte* and came back to Quialana with enough money to build a house and buy his *yunta* (beast of burden for agricultural work), he also seems to subscribe in some aspects to the elders’ wisdom masculinity. This could be because now that he is not that young anymore to migrate, he has got more to gain from the *elder’s wisdom masculinity*, and more to lose from the dominance of younger migrant men.

Another example of tensions between Quialanense and Cacaleño masculinities is found in the ceremonial activities of the community. In Quialana, for instance, only men can be part of the Catholic Church committee and to join, committee members are obliged to contribute approximately 1,000 USD. The former municipal president decided to waive the monetary contribution, as this significant amount of money puts many of the members into debt. However a group of elderly people complained about the bill and campaigned to keep the tradition arguing that “when we were young we gave lots of money and at that time the money was obtained exclusively from farming activities, we did not go to ‘*el norte*’” (Blas). Blas, an elderly peasant who was against the bill, believes that young people should not complain because they have access to more money due to migration and in any case “this new generation should give even more money, that is why they migrate, don’t they?” Blas’ arguments depict the tension in the performance of masculinities. Like Valentín above, he seems concerned that young people should not be able to take short-cuts to positions of prestige; they should progress only the hard and slow way that these older men themselves did. Let us not forget that some elderly people also

migrated within Mexico and to the US but in different circumstances and with less economic return - due to their work in agriculture - than the current transnational migrants.

Another example of this tension in Cacaloxtepec can be observed during saint celebrations. While the *city slickers* contribute important amounts of money to the *cofradía* celebrations, elders have a niche activity that “only a few men can do”, which is the crafting of a welcoming arch made by local flowers called *cucharilla*.

Photo 17 Arch made from *cucharilla* flowers during the Lady Mary of Guadalupe (Virgen de Guadalupe) celebration in Santiago Cacaloxtepec



Photo taken by the author.

While working with flowers is often associated with women (see Wright and Madrid 2007), Cacaleño elders have kept this knowledge to themselves, and according to Cacaleño inhabitants elders have decided to share this tradition only with male members of their family. By zealously keeping this skill, elders guarantee their importance in ceremonial activities in the town - perhaps the most important activities - because they know that at every single *cofradía* or saint celebration they are required.

In both communities, by protesting in favour of keeping the tradition, elderly people challenge one of the main axes of the brave migrant masculinity: economic success. By seeing to protect the traditions elders not only show their symbolic power in the community but also try to reassert their masculinity as hegemonic. On the other hand, tradition, custom and elders' wisdom masculinity is challenged by the brave migrant masculinity in every aspect of Cacaloxtotec's and Quialana's life.

Those institutions like the government and the Catholic Church, as well as inhabitants in general, know that thanks to the migration of many Cacaleño and Quilanense men the town has prospered: "[t]he town [Quialana] has changed a lot, now we have brick houses and many other things. But these changes are not because of the [Mexican federal] government, it is because of the migrants who have done a lot for the town" (Francisco).

7.3 From submissive wives to actors

Indigenous women - like other kinds of women - have commonly constructed their expressions of femininity based on others' (men's) needs and necessities, in such a way that their activities, feelings and body are dedicated to the care of others (Agarwal 1994). This has led many women to feel that the only way to fulfil their role as women is if they become mothers and wives (Chant 2003, p. 9). This kind of

fulfilment based on others' happiness is what Connell (1987) calls emphasized femininity. Indigenous women in Cacaloxtotec and Quialana for many years have also understood the role of women in relation to men, not only husbands but also fathers, son, brothers and other male relatives. However in the last two decades expressions and understandings of femininities have started to diversify, not through migration experiences in the main, as is the case for new masculinities, but through a combination of several factors that might or might not be related to migration.

Customs, traditions, religion and community isolation have played an important part in traditional expressions of indigenous femininity in both communities. Cacaleño and Quialanense traditional femininity was, and still is, depicted by a submissive, quiet, diligent, docile and obedient woman. To be considered a real and completed woman Cacaleño and Quialanense women needed to be married and to have children. However their status and hierarchy within the community was not based on their own performance and behaviour but on their male relatives' status (see Fowler-Salamini 1994 and Chant 2003). For instance, if the male head of the family was an honourable man, then as a consequence women of the house were likely to be considered honourable women too. Suppose however that a brother in the family was behaving in an inappropriate way in the eyes of the community (i.e. being an alcoholic), the stigmatization and dishonour would not only impact on him but the entire family.

Because courtship was not allowed in either community, Cacaleño and Quialanense women did not find the need to "make themselves attractive" to men. On the contrary, modesty was seen as an attribute. Women in the 50 plus age group would have subscribed to this kind of femininity. Nevertheless the social development and gender progressive programmes introduced by the federal Mexican government, the

increasing geographical openness of the communities (through the construction of roads and the introduction of public transport) and migration - physical migration and through social and monetary remittances - have given women alternative ways to understand and perform femininity.

In Quialana, one of the most interesting changes is the fact that indigenous women see themselves as potential actors in their own community. This is observed especially in the 25 to 49 age group. Maria, who obtained some work experience in the US and is now involved in the DIF committee of the community, expresses how much she has learnt and how much potential she has discovered in herself:

But before being here [DIF committee] I did not know anything about, mmm, for me everything [domestic violence] was normal. Mmjj it was normal to see a woman with bruises. [I have learnt] all kind of opportunities, even to develop myself, because before I was pretty shy, I was afraid of speaking. [...] And when we go and talk with the *licenciados* [name given in Mexico to people who “say” they hold a university degree] I speak and I understand. [...] I have been learning many different things; everything takes time and is tiresome and sometimes I wonder whether I will end divorced by doing this *cargo* [position].

Maria’s statement shows the transition between the ‘normality’ of being mistreated (domestic violence) and keeping quiet, and the ability to recognise that women can try, make mistakes and feel confident. Maria’s case also shows that her transition in her understanding of femininity was much more influenced by her participation in the DIF committee than her own experience of migration or her husband’s absence for many years. At the same time, it is important to note that the opportunity open to indigenous women to participate in the civic and political life of the community is highly linked to the absence of Quialanense men.

In Cacaloxtotec women in the 25-49 year age group have also started to experience and perform different ways of being women. Some of them have shown that they do

not need to be married or have a partner to be considered full members of the community. That does not mean that they have escaped from the scrutiny of the town (e.g. for not being married or for having “uncommon” jobs) but at least their ‘different’ performances of femininity provide examples of an alternative for other Cacaleño women. Like in Quialana, in Cacaloxtotec male transnational migration has certainly influenced the performance of femininity but it has not been the direct force in these transitions. Other aspects, such as greater acceptance of divorce or female participation in the labour force, as well as the federal Mexican programmes like *Oportunidades*, have been catalysts in the generation of different understandings of being an indigenous woman.

An important shift in the expression of indigenous femininity is presented in the 17 to 24 age range. Cacaleño and Quialanense indigenous woman in this age group have realised the importance of education. In fact, some of them (like Carolina and Claudia) are the main breadwinners of the household. Indigenous women in Cacaloxtotec and Quialana in this age group have started to respond to fashion to make themselves attractive, and their standards of beauty and fashion are much more related to the western world than to the indigenous one.

Seeking education and wearing non-traditional clothes in the 17-24 age group are activities strongly related with transnational migration. Most of the education for these women has been funded by their relatives in the US, which at the same time has influenced their understanding and performance of femininity (i.e. through clothes and music).

Photo 18 Three generations in Santiago Cacaloxtepic



Photo taken by the author.

From left to right; Rosario (pink skirt) a 50 plus Cacaleño, Monis (wine colour dress) getting ready to go to her primary school graduation ceremony; and Perla (black boots) a 25-49 Cacaleño carrying a present for Monis.

Photo 19 Quialanense women holding their musical instruments



Photo taken by Fidel Gómez

Due to the rapid and constant changes that both communities have faced in terms of understanding and performing femininity, some conflicts have arisen between the indigenous women of different age groups, particularly at the household level where ideas about “how to be a woman” clash.

Dalia, from Quialana, is 21 years old and the daughter of a returnee and current government officer. Dalia is in her second year of university and lives in an urban area of Oaxaca State. In my interview with her she mentioned the increasing differences between her and her female childhood friend:

Yes, there is a big difference; I think that even the way we dress. And actually the mentality it is very different [...]. For instance, my neighbours the ones who are my age, I don't know, she, she used to tell me that her mother didn't want her to continue with her studies. Because her mother said that going to school would not help her to feed her husband, that is what her mother said. That is what her mother used to tell her all the time and actually, later on, she stopped having interest in going to school. I remember that when I started college I asked her what school she would go to and she told me "I will not study any more" and I asked her why, and she told me "it is because my mum said that I do not like it anymore", but she never mentioned that, she never said that she did not like going to school.

The differences noticed by Dalia between herself and her childhood friend illustrate the different performances of femininity that coexist in Quialana. While Dalia has left the community to study at college level, her friend has been told by her mother to cultivate a gender identity that values learning "how to feed a husband and not to like education". However, some other women in this age range have found the strength to challenge their relatives and to become actors instead of passive dependants: "Even when my parents were telling me that I could not continue with my studies I decided to study. I had a scholarship [during A-levels] and saved all the money to go to study to Mexico City" (Isela).

Finally, an important agent that has opened up a space to perform femininity differently is religion. Below I describe how religion has impacted both communities differently, particularly in terms of femininity.

7.3.1 Religion and femininity

For many years the Catholic Church and its activities have been a meeting point for men and women in both communities, but especially for female inhabitants. Saint-devotion pilgrimages were for many years the only possibility that Cacaleño and Quialanense women had to visit other communities or to be away from home for a while. However, nowadays the possibility of greater participation within the communities, via religious associations, has been expanded due to, in part, the

arrival of non-Catholic Churches in both communities. Like many other indigenous communities, Cacaloxtotec and Quialana are predominantly Catholic, a tradition which has endured because of the strong ties between the church and the community government (see Sandoval Forero 2008). Over time new expressions of faith have been accepted and practised in Quialana but not in Cacaloxtotec, and this has different implications for Quialanense and Cacaleño men and women.

In Quialana, indigenous women make up the majority of members in religious activities. For instance, in the Evangelical Pentecostal Church out of 200 active members, 80 percent are women. In addition, *Renovación*, the charismatic Catholic group, has become very popular among Quialanense young women who have formed a band - exclusively for young women - which has even played outside the community.

In contrast, in Cacaloxtotec there are only two traditional groups within the Catholic Church that have a majority of women aged 50 plus. The groups in Cacaloxtotec have not been able to “produce” options of faith practices within the Catholic Church and are rather small. “*Damas de la vela perpetua*” (Ladies of the perpetual candle) and “*Evangelizadoras*” (Women evangelisers) only meet to pray and help with the activities and organisation of the local church.

The greater religious diversity of Quialana has given the female inhabitants options as regards their choice of faith and religious practices. In fact, the greater religious diversity has also transformed - or legitimized - other social institutions (e.g. the family) and gender relations. Being part of the *charismatic* Catholic group or the Evangelical Church requires a great commitment from members, who have challenged previous conceptions of what it means to be a “good” man or woman

(Brusco 1995 cited in Hüwelmeier 2010, p. 127)¹⁵⁵. Both groups condemn the consumption of alcohol and use of violence by men, factors that were previously part of the Quialanense' concept of masculinity and femininity. Guadalupe, a member of the *charismatic* Catholic group states:

You know? Previously I loved to go to the cinema [to Oaxaca City] with my friend Abel, we are just friends and we used to come back quite late. And of course the police officers saw us arriving late. I did not care at that time, in the end Abel is only my friend and I was not doing wrong. But now that I have fallen in love with Christ I know that what I was doing is not correct. I should not provoke even the slightest rumour in the community. I am a decent woman and decent women do not come back late with men in their cars.

Guadalupe's narrative suggests that reading these "alternative" masculinities and femininities is complex. On the one hand the man who does not drink or beat his wife, and listens to his wife, can be seen as progressing gender relations towards equality. On the other hand Guadalupe's concern with respectability in her community is tending to the traditional way of performing femininity, internalizing control over female mobility and sexuality.

Gertrud Hüwelmeier (2010), in her study of Vietnamese women in Germany, argues that Pentecostal churches provide a place where women find comfort regarding their family problems and migration experiences, which can be translated into empowerment despite male dominance in leadership positions. The same situation can be observed in Quialana where the re-construction of *born-again or evangelical Christian* men has been taken as an opportunity for women who were, for a long time, the subjects of domestic violence at the hands of their male relatives. Although women have benefited from some of these shifts, gender divisions remain fairly stark. Contraceptive methods are restricted and, in the case of the Evangelical

¹⁵⁵ Elizabeth Brusco (1995) in her study of machismo and protestant Evangelism in Colombia argues that 'conversion' challenges machismo. Converted men are re-integrated into the community, household and church life, adopting values that are at odds with those of the dominant culture.

Church, women are encouraged not to wear the local traditional dress because “*this might be related with pagan traditions*” (Estela). Youths and what it means to be a single man/woman have also been impacted by the new religious panorama. Single people are discouraged from attending public dances, losing one of the few opportunities they had to interact with others.

Transnational marriages are also put into question, especially when the husband who lives in the US has left the Catholic Church (while living abroad) and the family in Quialana remains or wants to remain Catholic, as in Carolina’s case:

But I do not know, my husband, he gets angry and he asks us to go there [to Evangelical church], he says: if you really really wanted to take them [to the Evangelical church] you could have done it and all these [family] problems wouldn’t have happened! (Carolina)

Carolina’s statement shows that arguments and disagreements over the phone regarding attendance of a specific church or due to a request to stop partaking in the annual town celebrations (now considered pagan events by the non-Catholics) are examples of the stress caused by new religious alternatives among families.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter confirms that indigenous Mexican masculinities and femininities are as circumstantial, temporal and contextual as gender identities in general (Connell 2002, Núñez Noriega 2007). In the case of masculinities, the fieldwork suggests that the performance and understanding of masculinities has been strongly influenced by transnational migration experiences. For both, Cacaleño and Quialanense, the type of labour migration (from agriculture to service), workplaces and peer interaction through community based organisations in their communities of destination have exposed them to different ways of being and understanding their masculinity. In terms of femininity, however, transnational migration has not been as decisive.

Femininities in Cacaloxtepic and Quialana have undergone important transformation through a combination of several factors that might (i.e. religious diversity) or might not (i.e. workshops organised by the Mexican federal government) be related to migration.

In this chapter I have explored different areas (workplaces, community based organisations and peer interaction) that serve as opportunities not only to reconstruct but also to question the masculinity that is practised in their communities of origin. Cacaleño and Quialanense men identify migration as a source of both increased work opportunities and increased feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness when they are in the US or urban Mexico. In many ways, migration destabilizes expected forms of masculinity and men felt some of the changes associated with migration to be emasculating. As Rigoberto mentioned “I have to cook my own food in el norte [US] but when I came back here [Quialana] I am treated like a king. No more cooking or laundry to do!”

Through the chapter, I have also explored how through hard work and their status as breadwinners at a distance, Cacaleño and Quialanense men compensate for their marginalized status in the US and urban Mexico and transform these disadvantages into strengths when they come back home. Indigenous Cacaleño and Quialanense migrants in their community of origin are seen as brave men, who risk their lives crossing the border or leaving their community, find a job in a place with a different culture and language and manage to improve their lives and their families’ prospects. This shows how Cacaleño and Quialanense actively engage in an ongoing construction of masculinity. Migration not only has helped to develop the *brave migrant* masculinity, but through social and monetary remittances Quialanense and Cacaleño men have also found variations that are neither the *brave migrant* nor the

elders' wisdom masculinities. Los *pelones*, the *born-again or evangelic Christian*, the *university students* and the *city slicker men* are also examples of the social impacts that migration has had upon the performance of indigenous masculinity.

At the same time this chapter has discussed how the newly ongoing conceptualisation of masculinity performed by the brave migrants has come into conflict with the traditional *elders' wisdom* masculinity. Arguing about the political and administrative structure of the town, which is ruled under customary law, elders' wisdom masculinity tries to cling onto its hegemony by ambushing ideas proposed by returnees.

Transformation in femininities in both indigenous communities has also been analysed. Indigenous women have historically constructed their femininity based on others' (men's and children's) needs and necessities, which has led many women to think that the only way to fulfil their role as women is if they become mothers and wives; a term that Connell (1987) calls emphasized femininity. However, the participant observation and the fieldwork in general have identified that Cacaleño and Quialanense have started to question and challenge traditional ways of being women and performing femininity: shifting from submissive wives to engaged actors. In both communities women participate more in the labour force, education and some other aspects of their town activities, which have given them different options of being women. These kinds of changes have been mainly observed among women who belong to the 25-49 and 17-24 year old groups. Apart from education, Cacaleño and Quialanense are nowadays more attuned to the ways of doing of the *mestizo* world than to the indigenous context. For example, indigenous women in the 17-24 age group follows beauty standards and social norms which were previously seen as exclusive to the urban world.

Different expressions of femininity have been strongly influenced by transnational migration but also by gender progressive policies within Mexico and the greater “openness” (road, television, among others) that both communities have with the non-indigenous context. Religion has played an important role in the questioning and ongoing construction of femininity. However this has only been detected in San Bartolomé Quialana. The migratory experiences of Quialanense have brought a greater catalogue of faith practices to choose from, and at the same time led to the questioning and reorganisation of pre-established conceptions of femininity (and also masculinity) at the local level. The picture is very different for Cacaloxtotec, which still zealously protects a traditional Catholic religious identity.

In chapters 6 and 7 this thesis has explored the role played by transnational migration in the re-construction of gender relations and identities. The fieldwork carried out has identified important changes in gender relations and greater female participation in areas previously dominated by men due, in part, to transnational migration; but can those changes be seen as signs of empowerment? And if so, who is empowered? The following chapter scrutinizes the link between transnational migration and the concept of empowerment, and claims that changes and re-construction in gender relations and greater female participation in public life do not necessary leads to a process of empowerment.

Chapter 8: Transnational migration and empowerment

8.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the third research question by making use of Naila Kabeer's (2001) framework to trace the role played by transnational migration in women's empowerment. Kabeer's framework of empowerment is used to complement Agarwal's framework of changes in gender relations and allows claims that transnational migration triggers processes of empowerment to be critically addressed.

Research has pointed to the greater involvement of indigenous Mexican women in the political and civil life of their communities due to the migration of their male relatives, and some studies have argued that this increased female participation is evidence of women's empowerment (see González Montes 2005, Hernández-Díaz and Carreño 2007, Perry *et al.* 2009, Stephen 2007, Velásquez Cepeda 2004). However, greater participation in political and civil life is not necessarily equal to empowerment (Sen and Batliwala 2000, p. 21). Communities and social phenomena, in this case migration, might create an environment that is conducive to empowerment but it has to be demonstrated in particular cases, not assumed.

The first section of this chapter focuses its analysis on indigenous women from both communities. In this section, as in chapter 6, the ethnographic fieldwork data is analysed from an age/generational angle; dividing Cacaleño and Quialanense women in age groups: (a) 50 plus years old; (b) 25-49 years old; (c) 17-24 years old. Although the study carried out by Sinha *et al.* (2002) takes into consideration age, they do not take it as a determinant variable but as a method to divide their sample and undertake quantitative analysis.

In the second section I explore the diaspora space in terms of migratory destinations, looking at men's and women's migrant experiences together. Based on Kabeer's framework of empowerment, both men and indigenous women are disempowered subjects at the community of destination, especially if they are undocumented. Ideas about inferiority and lesser value, according to Eyben *et al.* (2008, p. 8), can come to be internalised as a sense of lack of worth that profoundly affects people's sense of what they can do and what they are due by society. However, this research shows how even in adverse circumstances indigenous men and women find spaces to challenge these stereotypes. It also makes sense to look at men and women together in the diaspora since the reduced number of Cacaleño and Quialanense female migrants, as well as their scattered location, precluded concentrating the analysis on women only.

8.2 The empowerment of indigenous women?

Following Kabeer's three main axes of empowerment, this section explores the resources, agency and achievements in the different age groups of Cacaleño and Quialanense women who stay in the community, and their links, if existing, with transnational migration.

Current inhabitants of Cacaloxtotec and Quialana have limited access to material resources due, in part, to their location and their indigenous status (see chapter 4). The federal Mexican government and the Oaxacan state government have provided both communities with the minimum educational¹⁵⁶ and infrastructural¹⁵⁷ resources.

¹⁵⁶ Both communities have a shortage in the number of teachers and classrooms.

¹⁵⁷ Cacaloxtotec has potable water distribution and a sewage system, however Quialana has a water distribution based on rubber pipes and a sewage system introduced no more than five years ago. Both communities have roads that connect the towns with nearby urban towns, however the condition of the roads is very poor. Both communities have a small health centre that provides health services only to those who are members of the Oportunidades programme.

Federal social development programmes have also offered a further source of material resources to the communities¹⁵⁸. In this sense, it can be said that “access” to material and human¹⁵⁹ resources in both communities, although limited or precarious, exists. However, “access” to further resources has been enhanced by the monetary remittances of all of those working outside the communities. Due to monetary remittances parents can offer better and more regular education for their children in the nearby urban and semi-urban areas¹⁶⁰. Young Cacaleño and Quialanense can even afford to pursue further education (technical and university level) and associated upward social mobility. The town infrastructure has also benefited from monetary remittances used to construct sports facilities and improve local transportation. But can material resources (granted by the government or enhanced by monetary remittances) equip women with “tools” to exercise agency and to translate resources into transformative outcomes for empowerment?

In terms of agency, the question is what “decision-making agency” is exercised by Cacaleño and Quialanense women in relation to each town’s social context, what differences are there between them and how does the community hierarchy of decision-making responsibilities fit in? Finally, achievements have to be assessed for their transformatory implications in relation to the gender inequalities presented in both communities, in other words to encompass empowerment they should involve a shift in the existing power/gender relations (previously analysed in chapter 6) and in prevailing inequalities in resources and agency. Moreover, in assessing whether or not an achievement represents meaningful choice it is important to

¹⁵⁸ In cash and through basic consumable products.

¹⁵⁹ Access to education builds human resources.

¹⁶⁰ Huajuapán de León for Cacaleño and Tlacolula for Quialanense.

question not only whether other choices were materially possible but also whether they were conceived to be within the realms of possibility (Kabeer 2000, p. 25).

8.2.1 The 50 plus

The cultural context¹⁶¹ plays an important role in the life of this group of women. The 50 plus women were born and socialized in the time when fathers, brothers, husbands and sons had the ultimate decision (first order choices) over indigenous women's life. As girls indigenous women were supervised by their brothers, as teenagers their fathers decided to whom and when they would marry and as married women their husbands controlled their sexuality and reproductive issues. Most of these women register on average nil to three years of formal school and most of them are monolingual (Zapotec or Mixtec). Moreover the 50 plus women grew up in a time where women did not vote or participate in political or social activities.

In Cacaloxtotec as well as in Quialana the 50 plus age group of indigenous women tend to have fewer social and human resources than their younger counterparts. For 50 plus women most economic resources are linked to monetary remittances sent by their relatives living in urban Mexico or in the US, and the rest come from their petty sales in the market or from the federal programmes such as *Oportunidades* or *70 y mas*.

Josefina, from Cacaloxtotec, is a widow and lives with her four children (two sons and two daughters). Josefina had an arranged marriage when she was 14 years old with Donato, who at that time was 35 years old; she has never held formal employment and her economic resources came from her husband and nowadays from her children. When her husband was still alive, Josefina expressed the desire to

¹⁶¹ Defined as “[d]eeply-entrenched rules, norms and practices which shape social relations in different geographical locations and which help to influence behaviour, define values and shape choice” (Kabeer 2000, p. 46).

work selling vegetables in her community but Donato forbade it arguing that she “should exclusively look after the house and children”. Now that her husband is dead, she has tried to engage in economic activities but this time the possibility is denied by her children.

E: [...] and now you [referring to her son] do not allow her to go out and sell!

Son: No

E: Why?

Son: We do not like her to work

E: And do not you think selling would be a good activity for your mum?

Son: It might be but at least we are used to work and give her money for the expenses.

E: So, you do not think your mother should work

Son: It is not only that but simply because we are used to having her at home and if she goes out we will be worried about her.

Josefina, is not the only one facing such restrictions. Violeta who also belongs to this age group in Cacaloxtepec, states:

My husband does not allow me to work. My husband said: “who is going to feed me?” My husband does not want me to sell like my sisters [Violeta’s sister sells sandwiches and snacks] because he is ashamed of it. He thinks of what people may gossip or talk about us, he believes that people may question his role as head of the household”.

In the cases of Josefina and Violeta we are able to observe that resources are not restricted by the ‘lack of opportunities’ but by the kind of masculinity performed by their male relatives. On the one hand Violeta argues that her husband does not allow her to work like her sister because he is afraid that the rest of the town will put into question his role as provider and head of the family. Violeta’s husband might be seen as a weak man because he needs Violeta’s income to provide for the household. On the other hand, Josefina is restricted by her son who argues that he does not want to worry about her while she is on the street selling.

In the case of Quialana, no more than 30 years ago women’s presence on the street was also controlled by the community social context. Quialanense women’s

interaction with other women was restricted to agricultural activities, church and social events (e.g. weddings and other kind of celebration). Nowadays, the community set of rules (cultural context) has been partially modified, giving 50 plus Quialanense women the opportunity to interact in the public space (i.e. streets) without being severely judged. Allowing the presence of women in public spaces, such as markets, means that they have ceased to be exclusively masculine (see Hirsch 2003) and this shift has the possibility to create greater opportunities for Quialanense women to obtain human and social resources. The 50 plus Quialanese women who sell their products in the market have obtained abilities to negotiate, to manage their finances, to bargain, to improve or even learn Spanish and to interact with other kinds of men and women (indigenous and non-indigenous).

An example of those abilities is Matea, who opened a corner shop in the main street of Quialana with a loan she obtained from a business partner. Matea's husband migrated to the US only a few months after they got married but a few years later he stopped remitting and until today he has not come back. To obtain the loan Matea worked hard to gain the trust of her business partner who then facilitated the money to open the shop.

To do so, Matea had to improve her language skills and her ability to commercialize her products. In other words, out of necessity and despair she equipped herself with economic, social and human resources which have enabled her to generate an independent livelihood. This, in terms of outcomes, can be seen as transformative. Although her income may still be relatively low overall, Matea has achieved financial autonomy, which has allowed her to support her daughter and other relatives.

Photo 20 *50 plus* women from San Bartolomé Quialana selling their products in Tlacolula market



Photo taken by the author.

Notwithstanding that 50 plus Quialanense women have found spaces and activities to obtain their own economic resources, and to enhance their human and social resources, these activities seem to have little transformative consequences. Teresa, for instance, has worked hard since she was a little girl but her work has not brought her greater opportunities:

I have worked so much! Since I was a little girl my parents really took advantage of me. I woke up and went to the fields with my father to collect weed for the oxen... I had to carry a big bulk of straw on my back! My hair was so messy. Then I had to feed the animals and because before we did not have water in our solar I had to walk the oxen all the way to the lagoon to drink water. Then come back home, help my mum with the household chores, making tortillas, cooking. I did not have time for myself. Then I was married when I was 13 years old and I had to do everything for my husband and have children. He [husband] went to the US and sometimes he did not send any money so I had to work again to feed my children and look I am in my 50s and I am still working... in Tlacolula market and in the fields.

Teresa's statement shows that women working may not be a choice and may not be at all transformative. First as daughters, then as wives, they seem to clearly understand their roles as reproducers: helping and serving their parents, husband and children; with no time for themselves.

This observation confirms what Newbold Chiñas (1992) documented while studying productive activities carried out by Zapotec women in the south of Oaxaca. In her study Chiñas notes that although women's productive activities generate a significant part of the families' income, the economic roles of men are considered more important, women see their work as unpleasant and they carry it out only because of economic necessity (p. 39). A similar situation is presented among 50 plus Cacaleño and Quialanense women. Most of their available income still comes from monetary remittances; as a consequence working in the public space happens when they need an extra income.

According to several informal chats with 50 plus women, in an ideal world women in this age group would prefer to receive the remittances of their male relatives and only fulfil their household activities. 50 plus women working outside their homes puts into question the family reputation but overall men's reputation; they are seen as failures for having to resort to supplementing the household income through women's work. Moreover, the fact that most of the available income that this group of women have is strongly linked to monetary remittances confirms that greater economic access to economic resources does not translate into empowerment. Ultimate access to money rests with the migrants - mainly men - who 'decide' when and how much money is sent and whether to remit at all.

Levitt (2007) and Hüwelmeier (2010) argue that human and social resources can also be established through religious encounters and associations. As previously discussed in chapter 6, the possibility of greater human and social resources via religious associations has been expanded due to, in part, the arrival of non-Catholic Churches, especially in Quialana. The expansion of religious (human and social) resources established through encounters and associations, has given the 50 plus Quialanense the opportunity to exercise agency by choosing which group to affiliate with.

In both communities, the transformations that customs and traditions have experienced due to gender progressive reforms established by the Mexican federal government, and the lack of men due to transnational migration, has given 50 plus women the possibility (resources) to participate in the political and civic life of their communities. However, women in this group do not show a great interest in those activities. Some of these women do not know the name of their municipal presidents or how the political system works. Although they have been granted the resource to vote, 50 plus women generally do not exercise it, they argue that “that is men’s business” (Teresa).

Following Kabeer’s (2001) framework of empowerment for the group of women in the category 50 plus it has been difficult to identify transformative outcomes that might show a process of empowerment. The closest to a transformation these women get is through financial autonomy. Some women, especially in Quialana, have managed a living independently of men, but they may not experience this as empowering. First, because those women who are “economically independent” obtained this status in despair (when their husband did not come back or died); secondly, because their income is so low and work so hard that it becomes an

unpleasant activity; and thirdly because working outside their home puts into question their individual and family status.

50 plus Cacaleño and Quialanense have definitely improved their economic welfare but this has not necessarily empowered them. The increase in material resources is strongly linked to remittances, but resources obtained thus ultimately rest with the migrant. If the migrant stops remitting it leaves the recipient in a very economically vulnerable position.

In Quialana the expansion of religious groups and activities could have been understood as a transformative outcome, especially because a greater willingness to try and participate in different religious practices was detected among 50 plus women. However, although these are positive outcomes, these do not question and/or shift the society's power relations.

8.2.2 The 25-49 year olds

In both communities an important number of women in this age range have at least six years of formal education and the great majority are bilingual (Spanish and their indigenous language). Although cultural context still plays an important part in what they do or think, many such Cacaleño and Quialanense women have greater human and social resources. Within this age-range more than 70 percent of those interviewed and an important number of the total female population in both communities have at least five years of experience in paid work. These experiences have allowed women not only to interact with a different stratum of Mexican society but also to expand or obtain new abilities and skills. Some women from Quialana in this group have had the opportunity to migrate to the US, to work there and learn English.

In terms of first order choices, most of the Cacaleño in this age group have had the opportunity to agree to or choose their partners and husbands. They also have had the opportunity to sustain friendships before marriage and to have an opinion in relation to the number of children they want to have. In contrast, Quialanense in this age group still experienced the rigid community rules regarding marriage. In other words, first order choices were denied to them. Marriage arrangements were made without their opinion and reproductive issues were still in the hands of their husbands. Moreover, Quialanense women in this group age did not have the opportunity to encounter friendships before marriage and most of them after marriage were under the surveillance of their in-laws.

This age range is where the recent phenomenon of indigenous female political participation is most evident. In Cacaloxtotec women obtained the right to vote with the introduction of political parties in the town; however it was not until 2008 that female presence was registered in the municipal and civic-community organisation. In Quialana women obtained the right to vote and to become members of the community general assembly in 2010.

In Cacaloxtotec as well as in Quialana the position of “municipal secretary” was opened to women, and by 2011 not only some administrative positions but also some managerial positions (i.e. officers) are occupied by women. In this sense it can be said that social and human resources via political representation have been opened to all women in both communities but it is the 25-49 year old group that has taken greatest advantage of it.

In Cacaloxtotec, some indigenous women are permanent members of the party committee and have formed “women’s affairs offices”. For those women actively

involved their exercise of agency is done through confrontation, disagreement, questioning and by using the information available to them, as Hilda exemplifies below:

I used to sell food in the central kiosk and the [municipal] president asked one of his officers to inform me that I had to move out from the kiosk, but I told this guy “well if he [municipal president] wants me to move my stuff out of the kiosk then he should come and tell me so! We live very close to each other, do we not? Tell him that he should have the trousers to come and tell me face to face, doesn’t he have trousers or what?”

In her statement, Hilda exercises agency and defends her position as a seller by questioning the municipal president’s masculinity: “doesn’t he have the trousers or what?”, a great insult for a man in the community.

In Quialana some women in this age group not only participate in the political and civic life of the community, but some of them are presidents of committees. Paulina is the current president of the elderly people committee. In order to fulfil her role she is sent every so often on courses and workshops, and for that reason Paulina interacts quite often with the local government. But when her voice is not heard and her petitions ignored, she questions and confronts the local authority by threatening to use her “contacts” at the Mexican federal government:

But this authority [current local government] when I went to talk with the treasurer about a three day workshop [in Oaxaca] I told him that I wanted money for my travel expenses and the treasurer only wanted to give me 300 Pesos [£14] for three days and I asked him why? I told him that the former authority used to give me 150 Pesos [£8] per day and of course I questioned him: “look, the young women who clean and deliver letters earns 150 Pesos a day, why do not you want to give me enough money for 3 days?” And he told me that it was because the other young women were actually working. “And what do you think I am going to do [in Oaxaca City]?” I asked him. I even went to talk with SEDESOL [Social Development Secretary] and I told them that I wanted to quit!

Paulina’s statement is powerful and shows how she is using the resources learned and available to her. In contrast to 50 plus women, Paulina had more years of formal

education which has helped her to understand “how things work” in her community. Moreover, gender progressive courses given by DIF in the community have encouraged Paulina to express her ideas even when they are against those who for a long time were seen as “untouchable” (male leaders). Unfortunately cases like Hilda and Paulina are the exception rather than the rule. Even within this group of women, contestation and argument are still not yet accepted as female characteristics.

Although political and civic community participation is now open to the female population in both communities (all women over 18 years old can participate), it is important to pay attention to which women participate and in what circumstances. In Cacaloxtotec and Quialana political and civic participation - considered second order choices in Kabeer’s terms - tends to be “encouraged” or “imposed” by others (individual and institutions), in order to fulfil institutional rules (gender progressive politics implemented by the Mexican federal state) and due to the lack of male human resources due to migration.

In both communities almost 100 percent of the committee members¹⁶² are women because the former members, men, are outside the community. Women then are encouraged to participate not merely to substitute for their male relatives but also because these are the requirements to be considered part of the community or to complete the rules asked by some governmental development programmes (i.e. *Oportunidades*). In the case of Cacaloxtotec, ruled by political parties, the power of choosing a woman resides in the party committees. In Quialana in most cases the decision to name a female (and male officer) is in hands of the general assembly, not

¹⁶² Except for those committees where women’s participation is still restricted. See chapter 4 for more details.

a few individuals¹⁶³. Administrative positions, such as secretary or treasurer, are chosen by the municipal president.

In addition, an important similarity between Cacaloxtepec and Quialana is that almost all women in political positions are single, divorced or widowed. The fact that most women in political and administrative positions in both communities are not married or living in partnership leads us to question what some studies have argued regarding the link between male transnational migration and consequential political participation. For Velásquez Cepeda (2004) and Perry *et al.* (2009), the migration and absence of males from indigenous communities represents an automatic opportunity for women to have greater participation and, as a consequence, decision-making power. However, according to the fieldwork indigenous women's political participation is still restricted to those women who do not have the responsibility of looking after a husband or young children. And civic participation, such as committee membership and leadership, is still restricted to spaces constructed as 'adequate' for women (i.e. secretary or elderly people or primary school committee). So, political and civic resources are given but restricted and still managed by Cacaleño and Quialanense men (through political parties assemblies; general assembly and the municipal president).

Outside the political and civic arena, some women in this age range take part in the decision-making process by taking responsibility for other members of their family. For instance Guadalupe in Quialana, who is also the health officer in this current government, has supported her younger brother and sister to continue with college and university studies even against her parents' will. Some others, like Martha in

¹⁶³ In Quialana, the general assembly nominates candidates and through a vote a suitable person is elected. However it is known that those who desire to hold a government position carry out quasi-campaigns to inform the community of their intentions.

Cacaloxtotec, have broken their marriages in order to continue with their political careers. This, of course, has not been easy because the community will generally question the morality and virtue of women who challenge traditions and customs.

A willingness to open their own business or to get involved in new and innovative activities was also observed in this group of women (e.g. practising agency). As in the 50 plus group, religious groups in Quialana have given indigenous women in this group the opportunity to move from one group to another if they wish, or to belong to several groups at the same time.

To sum up, at an individual level some 25-49 year old Quialanense and Cacaleño women have achieved self-initiated political and civic participation in their communities and the possibility to leave their communities to pursue further education or to work. Both resources have been influenced by transnational migration. Male migration and gender progressive policies have opened the space for political and civic participation and they are, under Kabeeer's framework, transformative. Women have obtained a resource and have made use of it in a definitive way, but it is notable that it is single, separated or widowed women in the main. Their increased participation, presence and opinion may gradually transform the set of rules and gender structures in the community. Unfortunately not all women benefit and not all spaces are opened.

Formal education for women on levels equals to men, while formally granted by the Mexican federal government, has actually improved due to transnational migration. Through remittances some parents have the opportunity to grant their children a better education (by sending them to urban areas or by improving local schools). Education is a resource that can be translated into a powerful transformative

outcome. If pursued, education can give women financial and social autonomy from men.

In this age group, due to male migration, some women also function as heads of the family but this might not have transformative consequences and may prove to be a double-edged sword. The absence of the male relative may, in many cases, double or triple women's activities or responsibilities (Schwenken 2008, Palriwala and Uberoi 2008), and for some others may even represent negative social and psychological impacts (Nelson 1992, Kandel and Kao 2001, Carter 2004)¹⁶⁴. The case of the 25-49 years old confirms that indeed, their activities and responsibilities have increased due to the transnational migration of their male relatives, but social and psychological impacts were more difficult to detect. Especially in Quialana, women have accepted the fact that sooner or later they will be left-behind by migration.

8.2.3 The 17-24 year olds

In this group an important number of young women have finished secondary school and are bilingual (Spanish and their indigenous language) or monolingual (only Spanish speakers in the case of Cacaleño women). Although the conservative cultural context still influences the discourse of these young women¹⁶⁵, some of the traditional rules, norms and practices are less strictly applied. In terms of first order choices, for this group of women the "acceptable" age to get married has been extended and in some cases the idea of getting married at all is also being challenged.

Only a few years ago, secondary school would have been the highest conceivable level of education that a woman could have obtained, yet nowadays in Quialana a

¹⁶⁴ For instance, a woman living alone might be subject of sexual harassment.

¹⁶⁵ An important number of women in this age range are already married or living in partnership.

significant number of young women continue with college education. However in Cacaloxtotec most women drop out of school after nine years of formal education. Moreover, especially in Quialana, young women have achieved a change in the dress code of the communities which allows them more choice in simple matters (second order choices) such as what to wear. In the specific case of Quialana, this group of women have also found greater alternatives in religious practices, such as the religious band which offers them a resource to travel outside their community. At the same time and in comparison with the 25-49 years old group, most women in this group have not yet had any sort of migratory experience¹⁶⁶.

Mara is Matea's daughter and belongs to this group in Quialana. After her father failed to return from the US, her paternal grandmother decided to leave her house to her and Matea when she died. Currently Mara is 19 years old and works at the corner shop that her mother owns. Mara would like to get married but she argues that she needs to find a man who "accepts" her with her conditions. She says that the man who wants to marry her should come and live with her at the house left by her grandmother. Although Mara is not yet worried, she knows that finding a man who accepts her conditions could be difficult because the "tradition" says that women leave their houses when they get married. However Mara is firm in her decision and is supported by Matea, her mother: "we have agreed that it is the way we would do it, because this house belongs to Mara and the man who wants to marry her should accept our conditions". In Mara's history transnational migration has represented disadvantages (such as not having a present father) and advantages in terms of a process of empowerment. Mara's inheritance has left her with the capacity to

¹⁶⁶ Except for about five women in Quialana who have left the community to teach for one to two years in isolated communities in other states of Mexico through a programme organized by the Mexican federal government.

negotiate a more favourable conjugal contract or even the possibility to reject marriage altogether. Mara's fall-back position is good because she has a house.

In Cacaloxtotec women in this group are also challenging their strict community rules. Esther, for instance, became pregnant outside marriage while living on the outskirts of Mexico City. Her partner did not want to be responsible for the child and she decided to come back to Cacaloxtotec to inform her parents about her pregnancy. According to Cacaloxtotec community rules, a woman who is pregnant outside marriage should remain in her house trying to disguise her state and only has the opportunity to leave her house when dark. Esther, against the rules, decided to show off her pregnancy:

And I would tell my sister-in-law, well, if they [parents] kick me out, well then let them kick me out, after all, I know how to work, I can work in anything I would tell her, and I am not going to be either the first or the last woman to get pregnant without being married, and that I would not be ashamed of what I did, and well, my parents did scold me and all but ultimately they had to accept it, my brothers did too, and I never hid during my pregnancy as they do here simply because you are pregnant, and do not go out and if you must go out, go at night so that no one sees you, well I am not a witch to just go out at night. Some aunts would tell me, "do not go out, are you not embarrassed that people see you?" and I did not care because the people are not feeding me and the people are not supporting me or my child.

In her statement, Esther shows that having a migratory experience and having lived in a different social setting (Mexico City) has changed her capacity to negotiate because her fall-back position has improved. Esther knows how to exercise agency over her resources: she can always support herself by working even though she does not have a partner who supports her and her child. Under Kabeer's framework Esther's story shows a movement from disempowerment to empowerment; even when she knows that her community and family might reject her for being a single mother, she still states that she is not ashamed of being pregnant and not being married.

Kabeer argues that access to resources only translates into a process of empowerment if subjects are able to act on those resources in a definite way. Following this, 17-24 year old women, in comparison to the other two groups, have had access to more material resources which are being used in part to fund their education and development of human resources. On the other hand, these resources are mainly monetary remittances which are not generally sent directly to this group of women but to their mothers or elder relatives who allocate the resources to specific activities. Again, as in the case of the 50 plus women, ultimate control of money rests with the migrant; if the migrant stops remitting it is likely that the woman would stop her studies. In addition, the fact that the money (resource) is not directly sent or managed by the 17-24 women themselves lead us to question the “validity” of these resources. What would happen if the money was given directly to women? Might they spend it differently? However, that 17-24 year old women are not able to act on these resources in a definitive way does not mean that do not have transformative connotations because ultimately resources are invested in education, and education does have transformative connotations. On the other hand if pursuing education is seen as “the only thing to do” then the quality of the possible transformation is put into question.

Funding education through remittances highlights an important difference found for this specific age group between the two communities: more (around 10) 17-24 Quialanense women are studying at university level than 17-24 Cacaleño (only 1) and even Quialananense men. Although the multiple reasons behind this observation deserve a study in itself, it can be said that transnational migration has much to do with it. Since more Quialanense migrate to the US than Cacaleño, Quialanense migrants tend to have greater incomes than Cacaleño; as a result Quialanense can

fund their children's education for longer period of time. On the other hand, the fact that more Quialanense women are pursuing university education than Quialanense men tells us about the gendered aspect of transnational migration. Migration in Quialana is still seen as "men's business": men are socialized to migrate and earn the money and women are assumed to stay and be recipients of the income.

17-24 year old Cacaleño and Quialanense women are living in a time when female participation at the political and civic arena is no longer prohibited and to some extent is accepted. However, during the fieldwork I did not observe important participation of this group of women in both communities; most have decided not to take these opportunities yet; in any case their youth and inexperience would count against them.

Even though the 17-24 years old group have grown up in a social context that is more flexible, some women in this age group still decide to exercise agency in a more traditional way. The group of young women who participate in the religious movement *Renovación* in Quialana, a conservative religious group in terms of gender norms, justify their participation and actions by saying "well we do this because of our faith, for my love to God, right?" (Marlene). Yet some of the 17-24 years olds prefer to stop their education after secondary school (15 years old) and help their mothers with the household chores until they get married, as in Eunice's case. Eunice was in her last year of secondary school but despite having her parents' support to continue with her education, Eunice has chosen to stay at home, help her mum and wait for a man to marry.

Even those women who obtain a regular income may prefer to "stick" to the traditional rules and give all their salary to their parents for them to administer, as in

the case of Claudia the municipal secretary in Quialana. In these cases, according to Kabeer, choices are made but they have not led to empowerment.

8.3 The empowerment of the diaspora?

Using also Kabeer's framework of empowerment, this section explores whether indigenous migrants from both communities respond creatively to their difficulties which might allow them, individually and collectively, to experience a process of empowerment. Whether they go to the urban areas of Mexico or to the US, they enter stratified societies that tend to discriminate against indigenous people (Oehmichen Bazán 2005, Cohen *et al.* 2009, Ramirez 2011). Cacaleño's and Quialanense's conditions of migration might typecast them as passive victims facing disadvantage, but the fieldwork carried out for this thesis shows that indigenous migrants have been able to build grassroots organizations which help them to confront the challenges they face on both sides of the physical border, and to find ways to dignify their efforts.

8.3.1 *"I am living the real American dream"*

Cacaleño and Quialanense decide to migrate under conditions of material poverty, discrimination and lack of opportunities. Could they have chosen differently? As Fox and Rivera Salgado (2004) state, options for indigenous people in Mexico are limited. Most migrants encountered during fieldwork had on average no more than six years of formal education (primary school in Mexico), some of them had a basic knowledge of Spanish and at the point of migration (to the US) none of them had any knowledge of English.

Quialanense and Cacaleño migrants bring with them "ethnic" resources, such as being Oaxacan and indigenous; "cultural" resources such as their indigenous language and their traditions; and "imaginary" resources because Oaxacans have

gained a reputation for being hard workers and diligent. Some studies (Castles and Miller 2003, Barabas 2008, Stephen 2007, Fox and Rivera Salgado 2004a, Burke 2004) have argued that Mexican migrants when arriving in their community of destination are supported by hometown associations through which they can obtain resources, such as getting a job, paying smugglers, improving their salaries, organising savings and sending monetary remittances. This observation is confirmed for Quialanense and Cacaleño migrants in the US. Notwithstanding their undocumented status, male and female migrants are welcomed by networks which facilitate start up resources and the opportunity for further development. Additionally, the double standard of the US immigration laws “allows” undocumented migrants to rent houses, buy and drive cars, obtain mobile phones and fake social security numbers, among other services. US media also offer TV and radio channels in Spanish and in some areas of the country radio programmes in indigenous Mexican languages. Moreover Cacaleño, Quialanense and Oaxacans in general have access to the regional products that they are used to consuming in their communities of origin; and even ceremonial life is organised through the networks. All the resources offered and established through hometown associations have the possibility to have transformative outcomes when migrants make use of them in their favour.

Integration and assimilation used to be seen as the ultimate aim for a migrant living in a foreign setting (Castles and Miller 2003). “To blend in” would have been seen as empowerment: the migrant was disempowered when s/he was perceived as the ‘other’ but s/he might become empowered when s/he is considered and accepted as one of them by the community of destination. But transnational migrants, and especially indigenous Mexican migrants, show that there might be different ways “to

belong” or to feel integrated without the necessity to “blend in”, and still experience a process of empowerment.

Photo 21 Pamphlet of the Guelaguetza celebrated in Fresno, California



Photo taken by the author.

In fact, Quialanense in the US have highlighted their differences and suddenly what used to situate them in a disempowering position in Mexico (e.g. language and customs), has become a strong statement in the US. Through hometown associations Quialanense have promoted their dances, culture and gastronomy to non-Oaxacan and US society. *Amigos del Universo* formed the *Ballet Folklórico Quialana* (Folkloric Ballet from Quialana) and the Young People from Quialana Chorus.

Other Quialanense and Cacaleño migrants have chosen to stick to the traditional way to integrate in the community of destination. This was observed in a group of young people who aim to clinch a place in the US society. Marco, for instance, apart from being one of the leaders of the so-called “Dreamers” in Madera, California, is a

founder member of a group called “American Experience”, which seeks to teach young Latino immigrants to take political control and to become more “Americanized”:

We [documented and undocumented] Hispanic we need to take political control, otherwise we will not change our condition in this country. I also belong to a group called American Experience, I am a founder member of this group and I founded it when I was at high school. One of our teachers asked us to write an essay about a day in Disneyland or Six Flags, and it was so difficult for me because I never went to such places, or did not know what she was talking about. Also there are a lot of phrases in English that I do not know what they mean and with this group we are trying to be more "americanized"...learn more about American culture

It is interesting to note how Marco in his statement re-categorised himself as Hispanic. Belonging to this group seems to provide Marco with more resources “to take political control” and have an impact, a transformative outcome, in the US society.

The importance of location and network backup is well exemplified by Cacaleño migrants in the US and urban Mexico. Because migration to the US has not yet been consolidated, Cacaleño do not have the same amount of social, human and material resources that hometown association create (see Cohen *et al.* 2009). The Cacaleño migrants whom I met during my fieldwork in the US do not have an organised network that can facilitate living and working in the US. On the other hand, Cacaleño migrating to the outskirts of Mexico City have a well established network of *paisanos*, however these networks are not as profitable, in terms of contacts, as those that Quialanense migrants have in the US.

With or without the support of migrant networks, Cacaleño and Quialanense in the US take decisions (first and second order choices in Kabeeer’s terms) which bring them new learning experiences. For instance, Cacaleño male migrants stated that

they “choose” where to work, even when some jobs put them at greater risk of deportation. During my interviews Cacaleño migrants in Stockton mentioned that they prefer to work on the streets rather than working in a factory because, as Raimundo states: “selling in the street makes me feel freer and I think I can make more money”. Quialanense migrants also “choose” where to work. Having such strong networks has resulted in more options, such as work as gardeners, in restaurants, or in construction.

Photo 22 Cacaleño migrant selling iced lollies on a construction site in Manteca, California



Photo taken by the author

Having children in the US might be a questionable method to exercise agency but Quialanense and Cacaleño migrants have found in this action a future possibility to regularise their migratory status in the US. They have obtained the knowledge that if

they have a child who holds US citizenship, he or she in the future might become the way to obtain permanent residency. Furthermore, Cacaleño and Quialanense migrants exercise agency by challenging US laws, such as driving without permits

Men and women experience migration in a different way (Dannecker 2005), and as a consequence the choices and spaces of action that male and female Cacaleño and Quialanense have vary. Especially in the case of Quialanense migrants, as female migrants they face worse and more precarious work conditions (e.g. lower salary). Female Quialanense migrants might also have the opportunity to work as gardeners or in restaurants, but the great majority of them work as cleaners or nannies. In addition, since many of them migrated to reunite with their male relatives, their work might still be considered secondary and if their husbands decide that “they are not looking after the house properly”, they might have to quit their jobs. Within hometown associations, as described in chapter 5, they have fewer opportunities to participate and congregate than men. In this way, female migrants have fewer resources and spaces that can be translated into transformative outcomes.

As the above examples have described, Cacaleño and Quialanense undocumented migrants “make” important first and second order choices and “find” the spaces to exercise agency within their communities of destination. However, their choices and actions are over-shadowed by their clandestine status. This clandestine status questions whether their choices and actions have transformative consequences. I certainly observed that many of the migrants have increased their self-esteem and have greater financial stability in comparison with their original circumstances in their communities of origin. However, since most indigenous migrants are undocumented, material achievements can suddenly vanish if they are caught by the immigration authorities. On the other hand, Eyben *et al.* (2008) argues that power

shapes imagination and thus the potential for achieving desired change. In addition, Kabeer (2001) tell us by what she calls “critical consciousness” that men and women exercise agency when they are able to at least imagine the possibility of choosing and doing differently from the current reality they experience. Male and female Quialanense and Cacaleño migrants show an imagination of betterment and they are eager to achieve and change their current reality.

Although they are conscious of their limitations (e.g. not being able to travel freely or lack of English skills) and despite their fragile migratory status, at an individual level a good number of Cacaleño and Quialanense migrants have managed to transform their realities through their migratory experiences. This is particularly the case for Quialanense who have become, among others, university students, estate agents, vet technicians, bookkeepers, business owners and even singers. For Cacaleño and Quialanense men and women small experiences such as learning how to drive, use a computer, move out of dangerous neighbourhoods in Los Angeles or even being able to speak a bit of English have given them not only self confidence but a sense of hope that many could not find in Mexico. Through jobs that many would see as precarious and demeaning, migrants have been able to build houses back home, sponsor their children’s education, establish businesses back home and improve the services and infrastructure of their Oaxacan towns.

8.4 Conclusion

Empowerment is not something that can be done from the outside or granted by someone or by an institution. Empowerment is a path and a process. However, external agents can trigger or accelerate the empowerment (de Haas and van Rooij 2010) process in situations where women have had minimal participation in the development of resources or in the decision making process of their households and

communities. In the case of the indigenous communities of Cacaloxtotec and Quialana, migration has been a very important factor in the process of indigenous women who stay in the community, but it has not been determinant.

Using Naila Kabeer's framework this chapter addressed the issue of empowerment in two indigenous communities with a high level of out migration. In general men and women living in both communities have historically lived in hardship and with limited access to basic services (resources); the fact that both communities are labelled as indigenous and are located in remote areas in the state of Oaxaca have contributed to these living conditions. Moreover due to the cultural context and traditions of the two communities, men have been the ones who controlled what resources there were and decided the course of the communities. Male absence, due to labour migration, and the social and monetary remittances sent by those outside, have given new opportunities to those back in the community and reconfigured the organisation of the towns themselves, but is transnational migration empowering, and for whom?

Material resources obtained through monetary remittances have helped indigenous women left-behind to improve their economic welfare and well being, but not all of them have used these newly acquired resources to exercise agency. Social (human relations and networks) and human (skills and abilities) resources are less visible and as a consequence more difficult to identify. In Cacaloxtotec and in Quialana social and human resources among women vary based on age, years of formal education, religious faith, civil status and economic resources.

The 50 plus tend to continue to live according to the traditional social rules of the community which have naturalised their "second-class" position. The 25-49 and the

17-24 year olds have taken advantage of the material resources, sent by their migrant relatives, to continue with their education at college and even university level or to establish their own business. However it is important to question these kinds of resources because ultimately they depend on the sender. If the sender stops remitting, then the recipients are left in a very fragile position.

Both communities have granted women the right to be active members of the political and civic organisation of the towns (i.e. committee leaders and officers). Indigenous women now have *de jure* entitlement to some political and civic resources but most of these resources are still controlled by others or seen as only necessary for women to cover the lack of suitable male participants.

In the 25-49 age groups some women have become financially independent, some as a result of education opening up better income generating opportunities and others “in despair” when their relatives stopped remitting and/or failed to return. Notwithstanding this, financial independence must be put into question when women’s work seems to be unpleasant and their income very low.

The 50 plus show very little interest in the political life of their communities and although they have obtained the right to vote, many of them have decided not to use it. Some of the indigenous women in the age group 25-49 increasingly participate in the political life of their communities, have challenged the rules and customs of marriage, take responsibilities for others (e.g. siblings), have the opportunity to choose religious practices and they may, through confrontation, disagreement and reflection, be making their voices heard.

Transformative achievements also vary according to age groups, but in general this analysis has discerned at the individual level an increase in women’s self-confidence

and the reflexivity that there is a different reality within and outside the community; especially in the 25-49 and 17-24 age groups. At an intermediate level, some families have revalorized their rules and have allowed women different ways of being and doing. Community political organisations, ceremonial organisation and religious institutions have also recognised the potential of their female citizenship and slowly integrated them in the civic and political arenas.

Thus, it has been noted that currently Quialanense and Cacaleño in the 25-49 age group are experiencing the most notable processes of empowerment but this process depends on women's position within the communities and it is not exclusively caused by transnational migration. Moreover, in the near future 17-24 Quialanense and Cacaleño women might obtain greater permanent transformative outcomes.

Monetary and social remittances, federal government development programmes and the reconfiguration of the communities' political economy have translated into greater investment in women's well being, greater access to paid and recreational activities, greater religious diversity and greater political and civic participation. This new catalogue of opportunities is a critical dimension which has changed and is changing gender relations, the conditions of choice, how agency is exercised and finally the outcomes of such process. In Cacaloxtotec and in Quialana although the conditions of choice (first and second order) have been enhanced, the achievements in the empowerment process vary according to women's age groups and the importance that women give to the cultural context of their communities. Why is it that not all Cacaleño and Quialanense have responded in the same way to the changing environment of their communities that appears to grant them greater opportunities and spaces for action? Cacaleño and Quialanense women argue that it is lack of experience and the fact that their participation in social and political life as

well as in the decision making process is rather recent so they are just starting to obtain the knowledge and the know-how. A similar analysis in five or ten years would give us more insight into the process of empowerment in these two communities.

In relation to the empowerment of indigenous men and women migrants in their communities of destination, this chapter has explored how even though most of them arrive with limited material, social and human resources, Cacaleño and Quialanense migrants manage to enhance their position by taking advantage of the resources that hometown association and other migrants offer them. This situation has been mainly identified among Quialanense migrants in the US. Moreover through their jobs and the association they frequent, indigenous migrants increase their knowledge and access to resources. Already established migrants and friends share experiences which help them to face the US and Mexican *mestizo* society.

Cacaleño and Quialanense migrants exercise agency not only by getting a job, learning English or Spanish, regularising their migratory status but also by “sending back” to their communities some of what they have learned. Collectively, some of them (*Amigos del Universo*) also exercise agency by spreading their culture and social resources within their community of destination and through feeling proud of their ethnic origin. Even though undocumented migrants have limited employment opportunities, they can still have the opportunity to “choose” where to work. Some, as in the case of Cacaleño migrants who sell iced lollies in Stockton, prefer to put themselves at risk in order to obtain more revenue, feel freer and have the opportunity to become their own bosses. Unfortunately female indigenous migrants do not have the same opportunities as their male counterparts. Women tend to work

in more precarious and hidden occupations, and their job and income might still be seen as supplementary within their household. In addition, since the great majority migrate to reunite with male relatives, they can still be subject to male domination, although generally the gender division of labour in the family does tend towards greater equality.

After that, could it be possible to talk about empowerment of indigenous migrants in their communities of destination? In terms of empowerment there is not a binary answer, “yes or no”, because many aspects of the social context must be analysed. For Cacaleño and Quialanense migrants it can be concluded that through migratory experiences, in most cases, they have found opportunities that their communities could not have granted and that would not have been granted in Mexico given their indigenous status, so they have embarked on a process of empowerment, albeit limited and ongoing.

Chapter 9. Conclusion

A starting point for this research was studies observing an increase in the political participation of women in indigenous communities with high levels of male migration, which claimed that this constituted an important shift in gender relations in women's favour and implied or stated that it resulted in women's empowerment (González Montes 2005, Hernández-Díaz and Carreño 2007, Stephen 2007, Velásquez Cepeda 2004). Women who for a long time were obscured, ignored and depicted as victims of customs and traditions, were observed to be fulfilling positions that were previously male dominated. Male migration itself did not seem to be the catalyst, but the destination; increasingly the US rather than urban Mexico.

The longer-term absence of male inhabitants abroad can be assumed to be a factor which triggers greater female participation and destabilizes gender regimes in the communities. However, this is not as straightforward as it sounds because even though they are not physically present in their communities, transnational male migrants may "make themselves present" in various ways, from simple actions such as telephone calls, to more elaborate methods such as social remittances. Moreover, some women are participating in politics as substitutes for men, rather than in their own right, and some face on-going hostility and sexist attitudes. Close scrutiny of the dynamics of migration and changing gender relations in two different ethno-linguistic communities, with different systems of political organisation, has demonstrated the importance of place and of other catalysts of change at the regional and national level, as well as migration. Above all, it has emphasised the need to disaggregate gender categories and to recognise that not all women are sharing equally in the shifts in gender relations that are taking place and that there is no necessary link between shifts in women's favour and women's empowerment.

In terms of originality, this research has brought three dimensions to the nascent literature on transnational indigenous Mexican migration. First, it has provided a “high resolution picture” in the analysis of the data collected through ethnographic work. Since indigenous Mexican migration is transnational (Fitzgerald 2004, Kearney 2000, 2004, 2004a, Sandu 2005), it was important not to look at only “one side of the coin”, basing the research either in the indigenous communities or with the migrants in their communities of destination. Instead a multi-sited ethnography was adopted to better understand the transnational spaces that indigenous trans-migrants and those ‘left-behind’ inhabit. Moreover, this thesis does not approach its female respondents as a homogeneous group, but rather pays attention to generational and age differences between them and considers their experiences in both public and private arenas. It also compares two indigenous communities from two different ethno-linguistic groups.

A second contribution lies in a gendered analysis that not only pays close attention to changing gender relations but also examines the transformation of indigenous masculinities and femininities and their relation with transnational migration. As far as can be ascertained, this is the first analysis of indigenous Mexican gender identities and subjectivities. Transnational migration, directly and indirectly, serves as an opportunity to re-construct and question the forms of masculinity and femininity previously practised in indigenous communities. While masculinities based on the ‘brave migrant’ are threatening to displace those based on the seniority of male elders, women are embracing a wider range of femininities that go beyond their roles as wives and mothers.

Finally, the thesis contributes depth and complexity to the analysis of relations between transnational migration and empowerment, refuting any easy assumptions

that male out-migration results in women's empowerment. While transnational migration is an important external factor that can trigger processes of empowerment, it is not the only element to produce such processes and the processes themselves, as well as their transformative outcomes, vary between different groups of women and between different places. Overall, women in Zapotec Quialana in the 25-49 age group are argued to have experienced the most empowerment, although limits remain in terms of the transformative potential of their achievements and it is possible that in due course the age group below them will enjoy even greater empowerment.

Three main research questions were posed: (a) How is transnational migration of indigenous Mexicans to the US and urban areas of Mexico gendered?; (b) How is transnational migration of indigenous Mexicans to the US and urban areas of Mexico re-constructing gender relations of both indigenous communities in Mexico and in the diaspora?; (c) Is transnational migration empowering, and for whom?

Transnational migration of Cacaleño and Quialanense is gendered in that although women have joined the migration stream of both communities, men are the ones who are put forward as the "ideal migrant", especially when migration is done internationally. Since they were born, men are nurtured and socialized to migrate; previously because men were assumed to become head of families, and nowadays because it is an important step in their transition to manhood. In both communities migration was shaped first by economic constraints but nowadays in Cacaloxtepec and Quialana a "culture of migration" (Cohen 2004) has emerged, making the process of migration a rite of passage, as well as an economic necessity. However, this research shows that migration is not a rite of passage exclusively for men; nowadays in both communities young indigenous women are expected, at least

temporarily, to work outside their communities in the service sector of urban Mexico.

Gender relations are being re-constructed in the communities of origin and in the diaspora due to transnational migration. In the diaspora indigenous women enjoy greater bargaining power than women in the communities of origin. They are embracing new opportunities for mobility, employment, education etc. that bring them closer to equivalence with their husbands or male relatives and undermine patriarchal authority and control. The social context of the US means both an absence of close scrutiny of women's behaviour and a normalization of women's employment, mobility and formal equality. In the communities of origin transnational migration is resulting in increased autonomy for some women in the absence of their husbands, has propelled women into the market arena where remittances have been lacking, and has fuelled an erosion of gendered norms against women's political and civic participation. Moreover, women's own migration experience has also contributed to their increased autonomy and voice. However, migration does not write the script by itself. Gender progressive policies implemented by the Mexican federal and Oaxaca state government, along with educational opportunities and the diversity of religious practices, are also important factors in the progressive reconstruction of gender relations. Furthermore, changes in gender relations are not uniform between or within Quialana and Cacaloxtotec. In both communities women in the 25-49 age group have enjoyed the most gains in bargaining power, and those in Quialana have the advantage. At the same time, an indigenous woman might have a political post within her community, while also experiencing domestic violence at home. It is clear that gender shifts are mediated

by place, arena and by a whole set of individual factors such as age, education and civil status.

In terms of empowerment, this research concludes that transnational migration partly contributes to the empowerment of some indigenous women in specific social contexts. However, it is important to note that even when such migration triggers transformations in gender relations that favour women, this is not automatically translated into processes of their empowerment. Other external agents such as social development programmes deployed by state and federal government have also contributed. Those who stay behind in the communities, especially women, have indeed benefited by transnational migration especially in terms of economic resources. However this research found that even when resources are present, women may decide not to take advantage of them or exercise agency in terms that do not bring definitive transformative outcomes in their lives. Notwithstanding this, there are Cacaleño and Quialanense women who are experiencing a process of empowerment but this process depends on their age, civil status, religion and position within the communities.

For indigenous migrants in the diaspora, transnational migration has certainly contributed to their empowerment. Becoming transnational migrants has allowed men and women to enhance their lives and the lives of those who depend on them in their communities of origin. Indigenous migrants arrive at their communities of destination with limited resources (e.g. no English language skills or formal education) and on an undocumented basis, but they take advantage of the resources offered by hometown associations and the government of the place they live both to navigate their undocumented status and to increase their skills, they work very hard and they transform their lives. While most will send remittances back to Oaxaca in

the early years of their migration, some plan to make a permanent life in the US and concentrate all their resources there. However, the fact that most indigenous migrants in the US are still undocumented puts their achievements at risk. They are conscious that if the immigration authorities deport them back to Mexico, they will immediately lose all their material and economic resources.

In the following sections a more detailed summary of the main research findings is presented.

9.1 Communities of origin

It has been important to present the case-study communities and to analyse their characteristics and social context in order to highlight why indigenous migrants cannot be homogenised with the rest of the Mexican *mestizo* migrants and to recognise differences between indigenous communities/migrants themselves.

Although both communities recognise themselves as indigenous, Cacaloxtotec uses political parties as a system of government and Quialana uses customary law. In fact, chapter 4 shows that the distinction between one system and another is not clear and both communities, but especially Cacaloxtotec, tend to use something that I have called “mixed practices”, which incorporates both systems. Both communities still practice the so-called *cargo* system, which is a reciprocal participation within the community and a sense of belonging that Cacaleño and Quialanense establish with their towns. The two communities also limit civic, civil, ceremonial and political participation to some part of their population; generally women (although this is changing), non-Catholics and inhabitants of civil parishes (*agencias de policía*) have been excluded. The two systems, “mixed practices” and customary law, are not static but subjects to various shifts as they articulate with migration,

rising levels of education, and transformation of their own State institutions (i.e. police body in Quialana).

Cacaloxtotec and Quialana are struggling economically. Employment opportunities for Cacaleño and Quialanense within and outside their communities are scarce and these circumstances have strongly influenced men's and women's decision to migrate in search of better opportunities. Migration, as a consequence, has left Quialana and Cacaloxtotec with a shortage of citizens able to participate in the community collective activities of the town. That, in part, has encouraged the local governments to re-define who belongs and who does not and who is allowed or not to participate in the communities. For both communities this study had the opportunity to witness indigenous women taking part as officers in the local government for the first time, and in Quialana the first female *mayordomo*.

9.2 A gendered move

This work confirms that Cacaleño and Quialanense migration is clearly gendered, transnational, and mainly undocumented. Even though men and women participate in migrant circuits, men are still assumed to be the “natural” migrants, especially when crossing international borders. Indigenous men are those who go further (to the US and Canada), choose to cross the border at more dangerous places (*por el cerro*), take the initiative to “call” their relatives to come over, and are the main decision-takers in the issue of migration.

Migration from both indigenous communities is transnational in that migrants have found ways to continue to participate in their communities of origin, through monetary contributions and more recently through the formation of hometown associations in the diaspora. These associations keep them “present” in their communities of origin, as well as providing a source of solidarity, contacts,

experience etc. for the migrant community. However the level of integration among Cacaleño and Quialanense transmigrants varies due to the characteristics of their migration journeys. Specifically the case of the Cacaleño diaspora (in urban Mexico and in the US) is at odds with the argument of Cohen *et al.* (2009) and Kearney (2004), which states that social and cultural ties are critical to successful migration, job creation and a sense of belonging and shared identity. Cacaleño migration to the outskirts of Mexico City and to the US is well established, but despite being mature migrant circuits, Cacaleño have not established social ties (hometown associations) based on a shared identity. It is likely that the “uncomplicated” way in which they can return to their community (for those who migrate to urban Mexico) and their dispersion (for those in the US) have worked against the formation of hometown associations. Furthermore, and contrary to previous research findings (e.g. Velasco Ortiz 2005, Stephen 2008), Mixtecs from Cacaloxtepec who migrate to the US do not work in the agricultural industry but in the service sector as street vendors. In fact, Cacaleño are using the knowledge obtained in their previous internal migration, where they were also street vendors, and applying it to the US. In contrast, Cacaleño who migrate to Canada are exclusively men, and they migrate on a documented basis through previous contracts established between the governments of Mexico and Canada. Cacaleño women, apart from joining previous stages of family migration, have mainly migrated to urban areas of Mexico to work as maids. Among single young Cacaleño women (17-25 years old), migration might be considered self-driven, but at the same time their migration is expected and it is considered a “must” in their up-growing process.

Currently, everyone in Quialana has a relative in the US, to be precise in the cities of Anaheim, Los Angeles, Santa Ana and Santa Monica, California. It is estimated that

there are approximately 1,000 Quialanense settled in the afore-mentioned cities. Quialanense migrants settle in the communities according to the job they perform; those who work as gardeners live in Anaheim and those who work in the restaurant industry live in Los Angeles, Santa Ana and Santa Monica.

Very few Quialanense women have migrated to the US on their own initiative; most of them are “called” to be reunited with their male relatives in the US after they have managed to obtain a “stable” job. However, Quialanense as well as Cacaleño young women (17-25 years old), are not asked to go by any male relatives; they leave their communities because it is expected that they work in urban areas at least before get married.

9.3 Reconstructing gender relations

Using Bina Agarwal’s (1994) framework of analysis this thesis has scrutinized the changes in gendered bargaining power at the private (household) and public (market, community and State) arenas in both indigenous communities and in the diaspora. Moreover, the role played by transnational migration in changing or maintaining gender relations has been questioned. De Haas and van Rooij (2010), in their study of rural Morocco, conclude that migration may accelerate existing changes in gender relations, but their findings refute the hypothesis that migration plays an initiating role. In contrast, this research shows that some important transformations in gender relations have been both initiated and extended by transnational migration, but these are uneven for different places and groups and other variables also come into play.

Indigenous women in Quialana and Cacaloxtotec were divided into three age groups: 50 plus, 25 to 49 years old, and 17 to 24 years old. The fieldwork observed that in both communities 50 plus women enjoy greater bargaining power in the private arena due to their age, but this is not a new phenomenon. Being seniors has

given these women the possibility to have total domination in specific activities (i.e. ceremonial). However, the power acquired through age is most of the time exercised over younger women, and sometimes younger men; but not over other men in the same age range (e.g. their husbands). In the public arena, seniority has also allowed these women to waive certain rules applied to other women, such as that against getting drunk in public. In both communities these seniority privileges are called “respect”.

In terms of a comparison between the two communities 50 plus Quialanense women were observed to have more relative bargaining power in public (market and state) and private arenas than Cacaleño. This is an interesting observation because Cacaleño women in this group have more direct experience with migration than Quialanense women (many 50 plus Cacaleño are currently circular migrants), so might be expected to have the advantage. This finding contradicts the idea that female migration, in many cases results in the transformation of gender relations in favour of women (see Dannecker 2005).

In the market arena it was observed that 50 plus Quialanense women have greater participation than Cacaleño. It is not uncommon for Quialanense women to sell products in the nearby market or in the market day in the community. Their presence in the market shows a shift in gender relations because previously 50 plus Quialanense were not allowed to be present on the streets. The streets were for men and women were confined to the private realms. Nowadays most of the sellers from Quialana are women, suggesting that household relations are more flexible in terms of allowing women in the public sphere. But is this participation in the market arena self-driven and what is its relationship with migration? Many women, but especially Quialanense in this age group, saw the necessity to venture into the market arena

when they were left behind in the communities by the migration of their male relatives and the monetary remittances never arrived. So, for them it was not an option but a necessity. When their male relatives came back some of these women decided not to sell anymore in the market but some of them continued selling; this is the point when it became an option.

At the State level, despite having the right to vote, elect their representatives, and participate in the civic and political life of their communities, 50 plus Cacaleño and Quialanense do not show any significant changes in their bargaining power. Some women in this group might attend party meetings or assemblies but they justify their lack of interest through tradition (“politics are men’s stuff”) and in the fact that either their husband or children can represent them. Indeed although Cacaleño and Quialanense women in this age group have increased their participation in the market arena, they tend to live under and perform gendered traditions and customs, often without question.

In the 25-49 age group of Cacaleño and Quialanense women, increased participation in the market and community arena was also observed. For this age group, the local government and the communities in general have encouraged a change of gender relations in the public arena. In Cacaloxtepec and Quialana women are asked, encouraged and allowed to actively participate in the civic and political life of their communities (e.g. voting, as committee members, officers). And it is here where transnational migration has perhaps directly impacted the most in the re-structuring of gender relations. In both communities, the lack of suitable male members has encouraged the reformulation of community rules and traditions and normalised the presence of women in public space. Juan Martínez (2013) considers this increased participation as not genuine but only temporarily “borrowed” because, he argues,

when their male relatives come back then the positions are given back to them. Whether or not that might be the case I argue that even a “borrowed” or temporary participation gives indigenous women experience in activities and situations that were not previously open to them. As a consequence they obtain knowledge which can later be translated into at least awareness and voice dissent.

More Cacaleño and Quialanense women in this age group obtain an income but this analysis has followed Agarwal’s (1994) model and has questioned the kind of income they obtain, for how long and whether their jobs have actually become a window of opportunity or in fact reinforced women’s reproductive roles. Empirical evidence showed that most of the jobs performed by this group fall into the category of precarious jobs: they are informal, irregular, reinforce their reproductive role (e.g. cooks, cleaners and food sellers) and do not offer any social security. Moreover the jobs performed by these women and the income obtained are still seen as supplementary to household viability. Notwithstanding the characteristics of their jobs, the opportunity to obtain an income as well as having the possibility to interact with a different social reality has given women greater bargaining power in the private arena. The greater bargaining power obtained by Cacaleño and Quialanense in this age group might not be deployed directly; it was observed that some of these women use “subtle” techniques (i.e. denying sex to their partners) to make their voices heard.

It is clear that some of the changes in gender relations in the private and public arenas for these two age groups of women have been partly induced by transnational migration, but they have also been influenced by gender progressive ideas that have come through the federal Mexican State, which in the last decade has deployed policies on gender equality. How “real” are the gender shifts encouraged by the

gender progressive policies established by the federal state? A further analysis is needed for this matter but at least it can be recognised that government policies have the power to spread knowledge and enforce, through laws, women's participation.

The 17-24 years old have proved to be an interesting group to follow in further research. This group of women have enjoyed the benefits of the monetary remittances of transnational migration but at the same time they have also been strongly impacted by the "emotional costs of migration" (Zafra and Juan Martínez 2010). Most women here grew up with a father or mother figure who sent money but was not physically present to share affection.

Social remittances have also played an important role in the reconstruction of gender relations. New ideas have allowed Cacaleño and Quialanense women in this group to experience a different social setting than their mothers and grandmothers. For instance, courtship rules have slowly been transformed. Previously marriages were arranged without taking women's opinion into account and at a very young age, but nowadays parents allow their daughters to have a say and in some cases even to choose their partners.

In the market arena, the 17-24 age group have an important presence. Most women of this age have paid work and some of them save their wages for their own expenditure. Relatives are not against them working - although jobs have to be within the activities "appropriate" for "decent" women - and in some cases women are encouraged or even expected to work in order to obtain further language skills (in Spanish) and experience in general. Notwithstanding this, it is important to note that the kind of jobs that 17-24 year old women carry out (washing-up or cleaning) still reinforce their role as carers and reproducers.

Because of the monetary remittances women have obtained what previous generations lack: education and skills to cope with the *outside* world. Many of them have taken advantage of this and have pursued university education. In terms of comparison between the two communities, by the end of the fieldwork there were more 17-24 year old Quialanense than Cacaleño women at university and college level. However, custom and tradition still play a determinant role because these new range of opportunities benefit those who are single only; as soon as they are married women in this age-range must put their roles as wives and mothers above all else.

Finally indigenous women in the US at first sight might seem to enjoy greater bargaining power than their counterparts in the villages. Most indigenous women in the US work and their salaries are not seen as a “little extra help” but necessary for the survival of the family. Indigenous women who migrate by their own initiative might become main breadwinners in their communities and being by themselves in a different social context, the US, opens up for them a new range of learning experiences and opportunities. This research argues that in the US gender relations shift in that women obtain more bargaining power in the public and private arenas while at the same time male relatives (husbands, fathers, brothers, etc.) have lost symbolic and material power in the household and public arenas, due to the requirements of life in the US and their low status in an ethnically segregated society (Ramirez, 2011). The necessity of two incomes means that men lose their status as sole breadwinner, and the authority that this brings, and they are not in a position to buy in domestic help to substitute for their wife’s reproductive work while she is absent in the labour market; as a result they have to take a share in domestic work themselves. However, hometown associations may provide an opportunity to reclaim authority; although some migrant women attend on their own initiative,

others are brought along by their male partners and observations of the meetings showed that women are generally confined to the reproductive arena or treated as adornment.

Finally, an important number of indigenous women who now live in the US migrated along with their parents when they were children (1.5 and second generation). Although they are still Cacaleño or Quialanense, they were educated in the US social context. They might experience the gender regime of the village in the private arena and in the diaspora context, but the rules and customs that confined their elder female relatives do not apply to them.

9.4 Indigenous masculinities and femininities

This thesis has explored different contexts (workplaces, community based organisation and peer interaction) in which men have opportunities not only to re-construct but also to question the forms of masculinity that are practised in their communities of origin. It concludes that transnational migration has been an important element in shaping the ways in which indigenous men understand and perform their masculinity.

Cacaleño and Quialanense men identify migration as a source of both increased work opportunities and increased feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness when they are in the communities of destination. In many ways, migration might destabilize expected forms of masculinity and men might feel on some occasions emasculated, especially when Cacaleño and Quialanense who live in the US compare themselves with US men who have, in their eyes, more mobility, better salaries, better jobs and are considered as the ideal men. Nevertheless through hard work and their status as breadwinners at a distance, Cacaleño and Quialanense men compensate for their marginalized status in the communities of destination and

transform these disadvantages into strengths when they come back home. In Cacaloxtotec and Quialana male returnees are perceived as brave men, who risk their lives crossing the border, find a job in a country with a different culture and language and manage to improve their lives and their families' prospects. This shows how the same expression of masculinity can be placed very differently in gender hierarchies, depending on the place where it is performed.

Moreover, the *brave migrant* and *elder's wisdom* (Carton 2001) types of masculinity have developed alternatives in both communities. Especially in Quialana *los pelones*, the born-again or evangelic Christians and the university students are examples of the social impacts that migration has had upon the performance of indigenous masculinity. At the same time, the masculinity performed by the *brave migrants* has come into conflict with the traditional *elders' wisdom* version of masculinity. Defending the political and administrative structure of the town, which is ruled mainly under customary law in Quialana and through "mixed practices" in Cacaloxtotec, *elders' wisdom* masculinity tries to cling onto its hegemony by ambushing ideas proposed by returnees.

In terms of femininity, this research has argued that indigenous femininity is traditionally constructed based on others' needs and necessities, whereby the only way to perform their femininity for adult women is by becoming wives and mothers. However, empirical evidence showed that Cacaleño and Quialanense have started to question traditional ways of being women and to slowly become active members of their communities. This was mainly observed among indigenous women who belong to the 25-49 and 17-24 age groups and are not in a relationship with a man (e.g. single, widowed, separated). New ways of expressing and understanding femininity are related to the benefits that migration has brought to their communities. With

monetary remittances, indigenous women can stay longer in formal education, go out more often, buy different clothes, live without men, among other activities.

It was also observed that the emergence of new non-Catholic churches and the renovation of the Catholic Church has also influenced gender identities in Quialana. While women have become active members within the church environment, at the same time some of them have been further restrained by religious precepts (such as keeping a virtuous image). In terms of masculinity, religious ideas have re-defined masculinity by delineating how “a good Christian man” should behave, such as not getting drunk, not being unfaithful, not mistreating his wife and children, etc. This in a sense has benefited indigenous women who can use religious precepts as a way to defend themselves when their male relatives try to abuse them. Changes in gender identity related with religion have not been observed in Cacaloxtotec, where most of the inhabitants are still traditionally Catholic.

9.5 The transnational migration-empowerment link

This research has used Naila Kabeer’s (2001) framework of empowerment to assess the possible links between empowerment and transnational migration. It concludes that transnational migration both initiates and contributes to the empowerment of some indigenous women in some specific social contexts. However, it is a complex and uneven process. The advantage of having used Kabeer’s (2001) framework of empowerment was that it allowed this research to obtain a higher resolution picture, and to avoid binary conclusions such as those presented by Sinha *et al.* (2012) and de Haas and van Rooij (2010) - that migration is not empowering of women in itself - and González Montes (2005), Hernández-Díaz and Carreño (2007), Perry *et al.* (2009), Stephen (2007), Velásquez Cepeda (2004)- that migration is empowering for women.

Indigenous women in the communities researched are indeed experiencing a process of empowerment but processes are not uniform for all women and depend on women's age/generation, civil status, education, integration in the labour market, religion, and experiences of migration. Moreover, the processes of empowerment are not exclusively caused by transnational migration but linked also to federal government development programmes, religious diversity, and education.

For the three age groups of women it was confirmed that monetary remittances have helped women to improve their economic welfare and well-being (increased resources). They have better houses, better facilities, more money to continue with education, are better nourished, inter alia. Human and social resources have also been enhanced by a combination of state and federal gender progressive policies and transnational migration (lack of male members in the communities). Both communities have opened the door for women to get involved in administrative and political matters but it can be argued that first; although there are *de jure* entitlements (resources), in reality they are still dictated by others (i.e. municipal president) or seen as an instrument to cover the lack of suitable male participants. Second, the newly acquired resources may not contribute to women's strategic life choices, for instance over whether and who to marry, sexual identity etc.

The introduction of new religious practices and the renovation of others have been translated into greater human and social resources for women. That happens mainly in Quialana which has seen an important increase in female participation in and organisation of religious activities. However religious opportunities do not challenge power relations within the community, and as a consequence, do not have transformative outcomes for women.

50 plus women show very little interest in political affairs and although they now have the right to vote and participate they still argue that “this is men’s stuff”. On the other hand, indigenous women in the 25-49 year old age group participate in the political life of their communities, challenge previous courtship and marriage arrangements, in some cases becoming bread winners and responsible for other relatives. Overall women in this group are questioning gendered inequalities and some are making their voice heard through confrontation and disagreement.

In the 17-24 age group, some women exercise agency by deciding to continue with their education and by leaving their communities at a very young age due to formal education or voluntary work. However it is important to note that this greater exercise of agency is more the exception than the rule because no more than one percent of the female population has been able to continue with university education.

The ethnographic fieldwork found that at the individual level indigenous women have increased self-confidence and reflexivity. Indigenous women are aware that there might be a different reality for them outside their communities. Some families have revalorised their rules and have given women the opportunity to explore different ways of being a woman. Examples included changed rules about marriage (not at such a young age) and education (women have the right to go to school).

However, under Kabeer’s framework, the transformative capacities of women were limited or difficult to identify. For instance, some women have managed to generate an independent livelihood that enables financial autonomy but to do this they have to work so hard that working becomes an unpleasant activity. And for others, work might be a necessity and not an option.

Regarding the diaspora, Cacaleño and Quialanense arrive in their communities of destination with a limited amount of material, human and social resources. This immediately locates them at the bottom of the social ladder in Mexico and in the US (Ramirez 2011). However indigenous migrants, particularly Quialanense, manage to enhance their resources through their hometown associations and by taking advantage of resources offered by the Californian government (i.e. all inhabitants in the state are allowed to receive education regardless of their migratory status).

Cacaleño and Quialanense migrants exercise agency mainly by sending back their material and symbolic “earnings” of migration. Those who are solo-migrants and still have families living in the community of origin in particular will send money and strengthen their role as responsible members of their families. Those migrants who have brought their families with them will exercise agency by spreading their culture within the mainstream society and by feeling proud about their ethnic origin.

Finally, achievements among indigenous migrants in the US are countless. Some of them have regularised their migratory status, gone to university, established their own business, secured their children’s education, obtained a well remunerated job, etc. Thus, in relation to Cacaleño and Quialanense migrants this thesis concludes that through migration, in most cases, they have found spaces and opportunities that their indigenous communities (and Mexico as a country) could not have offered them. Many of them are moving from a disempowered position, which is related to their low income, low level of education and their devalorised ethnicity and language. Notwithstanding this, it is important not to overlook the clandestine status of many of them in the US. Indigenous men and women in the US make important choices that have transformative outcomes in their lives but being undocumented

place them in a very vulnerable position if they are caught by the immigration authorities.

9.6 Suggestions for further work

In this thesis I research the transformation of indigenous masculinities for men who have migrated to the US; it would be interesting to see what kind of transformation, in terms of gender identity, occurs for men who migrate to Canada. In addition, a comparative analysis of gender identity between Cacaleño who migrate to the US and those who go to Canada might help us to understand how the social setting and the kind of migration influences migrants, their family and the community. Indigenous women who left their communities at a very young age and grew up in the US (the so-called 1.5 or second generation of emigrants) are also an interesting group for further research. This generation is still very young and most of the information, traditions and customs that they have obtained about their communities have been given through their parents, but as time goes by they might be alienated from their cultural background and its gender rationales.

The “emotional cost of migration” is a rather new concept that has not received sufficient attention within sociology. Studies on psychology have already paid attention to the problem, but an incorporation of the concept in research that takes gender as a central aspect of migration will help us understand the different kind of emotional costs that men and women experience and their consequences.

Future work on religion, gender and migration should look at how the strong links that prevail in indigenous communities between the state and the church are modified or rearranged and whether this might have an impact on the paths of future migrants and those remaining in the community. Another topic for future research is indigenous identity and its relation to religious practices. For many years the

Mexican government has constructed an indigenous identity around the cult of Catholic saints, but with the new religious practices introduced in indigenous communities, how might indigenous identity be transformed or lost?

Finally it is important to ask why not all Cacaleño and Quialanense have responded in the same way to the political opportunities that their communities appear to grant them, and how sustainable those opportunities are. Cacaleño and Quialanese women argue that they are limited by lack of experience, such that they are just starting to obtain the necessary knowledge and know-how. However, for those women who have tried, their experiences in politics have been, in most cases, so disappointing that they regret being involved in such activities. They have faced dissent from family members, everyday sexism in the political arena and opposition from community members who do not accept women's place in politics. It remains to be seen what the long-term prospects are for women and public life in these two communities, whether the empowerment enjoyed by younger women can be sustained/enhanced as they go through the life-course, and how transnational migration of indigenous Mexicans will be gendered in the future.

Appendix 1 Fieldwork schedule

Place	First Stage	Second Stage
Santiago Cacaloxtotec	11-Nov-2010 to 14-Jan-2011	27-Jun-2011 to 27-Jul-2011
San Bartolomé Quialana	15-Jan-2011 to 24-Feb-2011	27-May-2011 to 26-Jun-2011
California, US	01-Mar-2011 to 20-May-2011	01-Aug-2011 to 30-Sept-2011

Appendix 2 List of interviewees during the fieldwork

Santiago Cacaloxtepec		San Bartolomé Quialana		California, US	
Name	Age	Name	Age	Name	Age
Ramón	45	Pastor & Danira	45 & 17	Jaime	45
Martha	41	Miguel (2)	31	Patricia & Pastor(1)	40 & 45
Bertha	71	Paulina	40	Margarita	38
Josefina	62	Maricela	26	Prudencio	45
Rosa Elia*	41	Guadalupe*	32	Marco (2)	21
Laura	39	Irma & Pablo	26 & 30	Rafael	32
Raúl & Tomas	40 & 50	Jose Manuel	18	Jóvenes Unidos para Cristo*	
Carla	31	Carolina	41	Raimundo	29
Daniela	36	Marlene	18	Juventino	32
Ismael*	41	Dalia	20	Lino	33
Esther & Fabiola	27 & 29	Claudia	19	Genaro	26
Hilda	50	Matea	38	Arturo	23
Leonardo	45	Maria	37	Olivia	35
Priest Luis	65	Oscar	23	Cesar & Susana	28 & 25
Yolanda	40	Herlinda	41		
		Sandro	39		

Notes:

*Due to their public position at the corresponding government position, their real names were kept with their permission.

(1) Interview in two locations.

(2) Interviewed twice

Appendix 3 Household Survey

Town:

Date and time of the interview:

Name of the interviewee:

Address:

Describe the informant (dress, shoes, hairstyle):

Where was the interview carried out?

How was the interview?

☐ excellent ☐ good ☐ easy ☐ normal ☐ difficult ☐ very difficult

Were there other people present? If so, who?

How well does the person interviewed speak Spanish?

☐ excellent ☐ well ☐ normal ☐ poor ☐ bad

The Family Unit

Members of the household

Name	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Place of Birth	Education Achieved	Language

Marital Status: single, single mother or father, married, widowed, cohabiting, divorced

Education: none, primary, secondary, high school, college, university, other (specify)

Language: Zapotec, Mixtec, Spanish, Other (specify)

Kinship

___ Mother

___ Father

___ spouse

___ Son

___ Daughter

___ Brother

___ Sister

___ Brother in law

___ Sister in law

___ Granchild

___ Father in law

___ Mother in Law

___ Other

Do all the members of the household live in the house? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If not, where do they reside?

Activities of the Household Members

Name	Main Activity	Other Activities	Place of work	Hours and days at work	Paid or Unpaid?	Estimate wage

Estimate wage: per hour, daily, weekly, monthly

What percentage of your income goes to your household?

What percentage of your income is for recreational activities?

Migration

Are there any migrants in your family? ☐ Yes ☐ NO

Who? How many? List the members:

Do you have family in:

___ the city of Oaxaca? (note neighbourhood)

___ other part of Mexico? (note locality, state)

___ the United States? (note locality, state)

Have you or any members of your family have migrated to other parts of Mexico?

Have you or any members of your family have migrated to the US?

Migrant	Migration	Date-Exit	Date-Return or Last return	Destination	Is he/she still away?	Cost of the trip	How did she/he get the money?

Migration: first sojourn, second, consecutive, return

How did he/she get the money?: savings, family money, loan, gift, land sale, other assets sale, other

At the migration place

Migrant	Type of work	Income	With whom does he/she live?	Does she/he send money? How much?	How do she/he send remit.?	How often do he/she send remit.?

With whom does she/he live there?: family, countryman, employer, alone, other

How do you send the remittances?: western union, bank transfer, pocket transfer, other kind of transfer

Remittances are sent: monthly, every 6 months, yearly, other

How are remittances used?

Do you know if he/she belongs to a home town association? If so, which one?

Agriculture

Do you own farm land? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What kind of land?

Do you work your land? Or do you rent it to someone?

If you do not own land, do you work at someone else's land?

What do you cultivate?

How much did you harvest this year? In Kg.

Do you sell your harvest?

Do you own animals? ☐ Yes ☐ No

How many?

Donkeys ____

Pigs ____

Cows ____

Lambs ____
Goats ____
Turkeys ____
Chickens ____
Others ____

Value of the animals:

Do you sell your animals? ☐ Yes ☐ No

How much do you charge?

Do you rent your animals? (i.e. oxens) If so, how much do you charge?

When migrants are away, who is in charge of working your land?

____ sons ____ daughters ____ children ____ wife
____ in-laws
____ intermediary ____ lent it ____ other

When your husband or children leave to work outside of the community, how do you get the money to farm?

Expenditures

Approximately how much money do you spend per week?

How much money do you spend on:

Utilities (electricity, water, gas) ____
Food ____
Health ____
Education ____
Entertainment ____
Clothing ____
Transportation ____
Other ____

Do you have a bank account? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Housing

Do you ____ your home?

- a) Rent
- b) Own
- c) Borrow
- d) Share
- e) Other

When did you buy or inherit the land for this house and/or the house?

How did you obtain the money for buying or building this house?

___savings ___migration ___loan ___sold land
___inherit ___sold animals ___sold others ___gift
___other:

Do you count with:

Bathroom	Yes	No
Toilet	Yes	No
Water	Yes	No
Electricity	Yes	No
Public drainage	Yes	No

How many bedrooms?

How many people sleep per room?

Description of the house:

Community Participation

In the last year, have you or a family member participated in *tequio*? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Which *tequio*?

How many times have you participated in *tequio*?

Do you use substitutes for *tequio*? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If you use substitutes, do you pay them? If so, how much?

Do you have a *guelaguetza* book?

Have you sponsored a *mayordomía* (saint celebration)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, when and how many times?

In the last year, have you or any members of your family served in a cargo (religious, civil or political)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, which cargo?

Why are you not fulfilling a cargo right now?

___done with cargos

___taking a break

___another reason, specify:

Do you use substitutes for cargos? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If you use substitutes, do you pay them? If so, how much?

Service history for each person in the household:

Name	Years of service	Position

Appendix 4 Interview guide

Biographical detail

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- Where do you live? With whom do you live?
- How many people live in your house?
- What is your civil status? When did you get married?
- Did you go to school? How many years? Where?
- Have you got children? How many? How old are they?
- What language do you speak?
- Do you work? Where do you work?
- Since then have you been working?
- How often do you work?
- Are you indigenous? Why do you define yourself as indigenous?

Community involvement

- Do you do cargos or tequio?
- What kind of cargos or tequio? How often? For how long?
- Do you vote?
- Are you part of a political party?
- Do you go to the general assembly or party committee?
- Do you go to church? What kind of church? Why do you go to church?
- Have you join any other recreational activity? Why, why not?
- Do you practice any sport?

Migration

- Have you migrated? Where? When? Why?
- Have someone in your family migrated?
- Did you work in your community of destination?
- How did you cross the border? How did you go to Mexico City?
- How was your experience of migration?
- Have you plans to migrate? Why? When?
- Do you belong to a hometown association?
- What have you achieved in the US/Mexico?
- Do you know many people from your town? Do you guys meet?
- Has migration changed?
- What do you like or dislike about the US/urban Mexican society?
- How do they treat you?
- Have you suffered discrimination?
- Have you deported, incarcerated, fine by the US/Mexican authorities?
- Have you “papers” (visa)?

- Do you drive?
- Are you afraid of the immigration forces?
- How often do you come back to your town? Why do you come back?
- Where would you prefer to live?
- Are you thinking on staying longer in the US/Mexico City? Why?

Gender Relations and Empowerment

- What do you do at home?
- What does your partner do at home?
- How do you divide the activities?
- Have you been suffer domestic violence?
- Do you have a good relationship with your partner?
- Do you enjoy sex? How decides about it?
- If your partner is absent: do you miss him/her?
- How often do you see him/her? Doe he phone you?
- Would you like to join him/her?
- What is your relationship with your in-laws?
- Do you have friends? Do you go out with them?
- What do you with the money your partner sends?
- Do you like where you live? Do you like what you do?
- If you would have the opportunity, what would you do?
- What your plans for the future

Appendix 5 Reconstruction of gender changes under Agarwal's framework of analysis

Age group	Household Arena		Market Arena		Community and State Arena	
	Cacaloxtepec	Quialana	Cacaloxtepec	Quialana	Cacaloxtepec	Quialana
50 plus	Minor + Changes Government/ Community grants: Money increases their bargaining power	Some + Changes Religion: Gender norms of Charismatic Catho./Evangelics increases bargaining power	Minor + Changes Income generation from home (hats) limited the number of women joining the mkt. arena (family labour does not increase bargaining power)	+ Changes New Mkt. opportunities Exposure to outside world (acquiring language skills/new ideas) Some financial autonomy but would prefer not to work	Some + Changes No <i>de jure</i> change but <i>de facto</i> some women voting but not standing for election or participating in committees	Very Minor + Changes Very marginal/low participation following granting by community of right to vote, stand for election and attend general assembly
	<u>Factors:</u> Gender equal development programmes (Federal/state govt)	<u>Factors:</u> (a)Religious diversity brought by migrants (b)Exposure to gender progressive ideas from gender progressive workshop organise by federal/ state government.	<u>Factors:</u> (a)Some similarities to Quialana but fewer transnational male migrants so fewer women lacking remittances (b)Perpetuation of cultural norm of male bread-winner	<u>Factors:</u> (a)Lack of remittances from migrants (b)Perpetuation of cultural norm of male bread-winner	<u>Factors:</u> (a)Some erosion of cultural norms against women's participation (b)Female circular migrants returning with new ideas (d)Lack of formal education	<u>Factors:</u> (a)Strength of cultural norms against women's participation (held by men and women) (b)Lack of formal education

Unit: Women's bargaining power

Minor + Changes = Minor increases in women's bargaining power

Age group	Household Arena		Market Arena		Community and State Arena	
	Cacaloxtepec	Quialana	Cacaloxtepec	Quialana	Cacaloxtepec	Quialana
25-49 years old	Minor + Changes Some increased autonomy in absence of husband More likely to challenge patriarchal authority (within boundaries)	Minor + Changes Some increased autonomy in absence of husband More likely to challenge patriarchal authority (within boundaries)	+ Changes Paid employment accepted by the community (opportunities limited) Some financial autonomy	+ Changes Income generation accepted and embraced (opportunities limited) Some financial autonomy	+ Changes No <i>de jure</i> change but <i>de facto</i> most women voting and participating in politics at lower levels (committees) and some women standing for office Gaining political experience but can face hostility	Very + Changes High participation at all levels following granting by community of right to vote, stand for election and attend general assembly Gaining political experience but can face hostility
	<u>Factors:</u> (a)More access to formal education (through remittances) (b)Proven capacity to work and earn money (c)Exposure to gender progressive ideas (Federal/state govt)	<u>Factors:</u> (a)More access to formal education (through remittances) (b)Proven capacity to work and earn money (c)Exposure to gender progressive ideas (Federal/state govt) (d)Religious diversity brought by migrants	<u>Factors:</u> (a)More access to formal education (b)Lack of remittances (c)General economic necessity (d)Circular female labour migration within Mexico normalised	<u>Factors:</u> (a)More access to formal education (b)Lack of remittances (c)General economic necessity (d)Women selling goods and services normalised	<u>Factors:</u> (a)Erosion of cultural norms against women's participation (b)Long-term absence of male inhabitants creating spaces (c)Female circular migrants returning with new ideas (d)Better levels of education (e)Accumulated experience (f)Exposure to gender progressive ideas (Federal/state govt)	<u>Factors:</u> (a)Erosion of cultural norms against women's participation (b)Long-term absence of male inhabitants creating spaces (c)Some female circular migrants returning with new ideas (d)Better levels of education (e)Accumulated experience (f)Exposure to gender progressive ideas (Federal/state govt)

Age group	Household Arena		Market Arena		Community and State Arena	
	Cacaloxtepec	Quialana	Cacaloxtepec	Quialana	Cacaloxtepec	Quialana
17-24 years old	+ Changes Considerable autonomy in absence of male relative (when single) Very likely to challenge patriarchal authority (with some boundaries)	+ Changes Considerable autonomy in absence of male relative (when single) Very likely to challenge patriarchal authority (with some boundaries)	+ Changes Paid employment accepted and embraced Most become rural-urban migrants at least until marriage Increased financial autonomy	+ Changes Paid employment accepted and embraced Most become rural-urban migrants at least until marriage Increased financial autonomy	Minor + Changes No <i>de jure</i> change but <i>de facto</i> most women voting, low political participation at low and medium levels None standing for office	Minor + Changes Low level of participation at lower levels following granting by community of right to vote, stand for election and attend general assembly High participation in artistic/cultural and religious activities
	<u>Factors:</u> (a) More access to formal education (b) Exposure to gender progressive ideas through work/school/social remittances/govt. (c) Marriage limits bargaining power	<u>Factors:</u> (a) Much greater access to formal education (b) Exposure to gender progressive ideas through work/school/social remittances/govt. and religious diversity (c) Greater access to economic resources (remittances) (d) Marriage limits bargaining power	<u>Factors:</u> (a) More access to formal education (b) Women expect and expected to be economically active outside community	<u>Factors:</u> (a) Much greater access to formal education. (b) Women expect and expected to be economically active outside community	<u>Factors:</u> (a) Erosion of cultural norms against women's participation (b) Exposure to gender progressive ideas (Federal/state govt and migrant relatives and own migration) (c) Lack of experience due to youth	<u>Factors:</u> (a) Erosion of cultural norms against women's participation (b) Exposure to gender progressive ideas (Federal/state govt and migrant relatives and own migration) (c) Lack of experience due to youth (d) Community investment in youth activities funded by remittances/ govt.

Appendix 6 Indigenous women: processes of empowerment under Kabeer's framework of analysis

Age group		Resources	Agency	Achievements (transformative outcomes)
50 plus	C	(a)Material resources provided by the state/federal government and increased by monetary remittances (b)Human and social resources enhanced by allowing women in the public space (c)Political/civic resources obtained by lack of men/gender progressive policies	(a)Some agency, restricted by others (children/husbands) (b)Decide not to participate in political and civic life (c)Some vote	Not detected
	Q	(a)a, b, c <i>ditto</i> . (b)Human and social resources enhanced out of despair (lack of remittances) (c)Diversity of religious groups.	(a)Some agency, restricted by others (children/husbands) (b)Decide not to participate in political and civic life or attend general assembly (c)Some choose to join a religious/group organisation	Limited financial autonomy
25-49 years old	C	a)Material resources provided by the state/federal government and increased by monetary remittances (b)Human and social resources enhanced by allowing women in the public space/lack of remittances/government workshops/work experience (c)Political/civic resources obtained by lack of men/gender progressive policies (c)Social and human resources enhanced by their own migration (i.e. Spanish skills)	(a)Choose their partners (b)Might have a say in the number of children (c)All vote and some participate in the political/civic life (d)Protesting/expressing idea (still severely criticised) (d)Willingness to open businesses	(a)Clerical/low managerial jobs are performed by women (b)Female members/presidents of committees (c)Some knowledge of how the community works (this could also be a resource) (d)Some mobility and financial autonomy
	Q	(a)a, b, c <i>ditto</i> . (b)Diversity of religious groups. (c)Social and human resources enhanced	(a)Might have a say while choosing partners. (b)Might have a say in the number of	(a)Clerical/low managerial jobs are performed by women (b)Some religious (Catholic) posts

		by their own migration (i.e. English/Spanish skills)	children. Hidden techniques to have a say (provoking abortions). (c)Some vote and high participation in political/civic life (d)Protesting/expressing ideas (still severely criticised) (d)Willingness to open businesses (e)Supporting other members of the family	femininised (c)Female members/presidents of committees. (d)Some knowledge of how the community works (this could also be a resource) (e)Some mobility and financial autonomy
17-24 years old	C	a)Greater material resources provided by state/federal government and increased by monetary remittances (b)Human and social resources enhanced by allowing women in the public space/work experience. (c)Political/civic resources obtained by lack of men/gender progressive policies (d)More relaxed set of community norms.	(a)Choose their partners and can choose someone from outside the community (b)Decide the number of children/whether to get married or not (c)Many vote but low participation in public and civic life (d)Continue or stop their education (e)Possibility of becoming migrants	(a)Age to marry extended (b)Decide the number of children/whether to get married or not (c)Dress code less policed by the community (d)More mobility
	Q	(a)a, b, c, d <i>ditto</i> . (b)Diversity of religious groups	(a)Some can choose their partners and can choice someone from outside the community (b)Might decide the number of children/whether to get married or not (c)Many vote but low participation in public and civic life (d)Continue or stop their education (e)Possibility of becoming migrants (f)Join religious/artistic activities	(a)Age to marry extended (b)Some decision in the number of children/whether to get married or not (c)Negotiate a more favourable conjugal contract (c)Dress code less policed by the community (d)More mobility

C: Santiago Cacaloxtotec Q: San Bartolomé Quialana

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